

**IN-CAMERA PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE  
NEW SOUTH WALES AMBULANCE SERVICE**

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**At Sydney on Monday 28 July 2008**

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**The Committee met at 9.10 a.m.**

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**PRESENT**

The Hon. R. M. Parker (Chair)

The Hon. A. Catanzariti

The Hon. G. J. Donnelly

The Hon. M. A. Ficarra

Ms L. Rhiannon

The Hon. C. M. Robertson

**ANTHONY MICHAEL WEEKES (Witness S)**, Ambulance Officer, Ambulance Service of New South Wales, 62A Webb Street, East Gosford,

**STEPHEN RICHARD HOGEVEEN (Witness K)**, Station Manager, New South Wales Ambulance Service, Post Office Box 386, Toukley, and

**JAMES MARK STIRLING (Witness R)**, Ambulance Officer, New South Wales Ambulance Service, 74 Gallipoli Avenue Umina, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Welcome to the Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the New South Wales Ambulance Service. I am the Chair of the Committee. The Committee is looking into the management and operations of the Ambulance Service and we need you to reflect on those terms of reference and give us your experience. We are hoping you can assist us in improving the New South Wales Ambulance Service with our recommendations. However, we cannot take on the role of solving individual problems, rather we are aiming to use those individual problems to try to get to general recommendations.

The Committee resolved previously to hear your evidence in camera. At the end of the hearing I will give you an opportunity to decide whether you want to release the transcript of what you have said either partially or wholly in confidence, or you might choose to read the transcript and make that decision later. You can make an appointment with the secretariat to read the transcript and make your decision. Would you each now state your full name, the capacity in which you are appearing and take either the oath or the affirmation.

**Mr WEEKES:** I have been with the Ambulance Service for 31 years. I am also basically the President of the Brisbane Waters Sub-Branch, Central Coast, Health Services Union.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** I have been employed by the Ambulance Service for almost 29 years.

**Mr STIRLING:** I am stationed at Ettalong Station, and have been in the service for 12 years. I was the prior secretary, under Tony Weekes, of the Health Services Union.

**CHAIR:** Thank you all for coming today. I am sorry that you have a restricted time but the Committee is trying to hear from as many people as we can. Do you have a brief opening statement before questions commence?

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** I am accompanied by Tony Weekes, the Brisbane Waters Sub-Branch President, and Jim Stirling, the former secretary. We have had quite a number of dealings with ambulance management, mismanagement, and bullying and harassment in our job on the Central Coast. I will start out by outlining why the CEO, Greg Rochford, is not fit to be the CEO of the Ambulance Service of New South Wales. Could I ask that my submissions to the inquiry be affirmed under oath so that they can be taken as truthful documents put to the inquiry? Is that possible?

**CHAIR:** You do not need to do that, we assume that is the case.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** I need to outline certain particular events that took place so that you can get a grasp of what has been going on in the Ambulance Service management and mismanagement, and bullying and harassment. In a meeting in Parliament House, which the three of us attended, and which was chaired by Grant McBride, there were about five New South Wales parliamentarians in attendance as was Morris Iemma's secretary as Morris was out of Parliament at the time due to a knee injury from skiing—otherwise he would have been there. The meeting was called to discuss the Toukley asbestos contamination and our concerns about staff being bullied and harassed to go into that building before it was made safe to reoccupy. It was also about staffing, particularly at Doyalson and Morisset stations on the Central Coast and Lower Hunter.

During the meeting one parliamentarian asked Mr Rochford if the staffing at Doyalson and Morisset were fully staffed on weekends. Mr Rochford turned to Mr Loudfoot and said, "Oh, yes, we fully maintain those stations, don't we, Mr Loudfoot?" Mr Loudfoot said straightaway, "I can assure everybody at this meeting that those two stations are fully maintained." That was an absolute lie. I immediately prove that that was so by giving the details of the two previous weekends where they had had only one staff member at each station. That was a common occurrence. Time and time again it happened, for years, and we are absolutely sick of it. There

are safety concerns for one officer responding from those two stations to various jobs and also it does not do any good for any member of the public who has suffered a cardiac arrest, for instance, and we are responding with only one crew person. Also, that takes resources away from the Central Coast. We are absolutely horrified that our CEO and our Northern Division manager could lie directly to our representatives of the people of New South Wales.

**Mr WEEKES:** Yes, unbelievable.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** Point of clarification, Madam Chair. The witness is asserting that the two individuals named categorically lied. My question is whether the position they asserted was the case. We need to be clear about this. I am not quite sure how the record should reflect the position. There is an assertion that the gentleman lied. That is obviously the opinion of the witness, but we are not sure at all that the two individuals deliberately lied and misled the people present at the meeting.

**Mr HOGVEEN:** That was also the opinion of the parliamentarians who attended the meeting. And we have discussed these issues with Greg Rochford and Allan Loudfoot on numerous occasions.

**CHAIR:** To clarify the matter, it is clearly the witnesses' view that they are presenting. Unless they have documentary evidence otherwise, we would assume, I would think, that this is the witnesses' view. As always, our witnesses present their own views and opinions on the issues. Given the short amount of time we have, we need to further clarify a quick synopsis of the issue and then perhaps get into what that means, in effect, for the operation of the Ambulance Service.

**Mr HOGVEEN:** What that meant for me was that I was then targeted by the CEO and the northern division manager. I was the staff representative and the Health Services Union representative dealing with the asbestos issues at Toukley station. The station was repaired by a company called [REDACTED], and they did extremely shoddy work. The staff refused to go back into the station. This is a serious occupational health and safety issue. The Ambulance Service took the union to the industrial court, and the industrial court appointed WorkCover to oversee it. WorkCover held a meeting on the station with all the interested parties—Paul Crittenden, MP, the staff, the HSU, and managers for the Ambulance Service. WorkCover took one look at the station and said that it was dangerous, that the roof could have collapsed on us, which had been rebuilt by Crockett, and also that they believed there was dangerous asbestos in the building. They ordered an industrial hygienist to report on that, and that was done.

The hygienist found that there were eight areas of asbestos dust in the station, including airborne asbestos. We were kept out of the station for approximately eight months. We had an agreement that if we re-entered the station and water came through the roof—we knew there was asbestos debris in the roof—the staff would immediately vacate the station until it was tested to be safe. A month after we reoccupied the building, water came back through the roof again in another storm, and the staff voted to leave the building. Mr Dent, who was the operations manager on the Central Coast, spoke to Allan Loudfoot, the northern division manager. Allan Loudfoot refused to allow the staff to leave. The staff were individually either visited or phoned by the sector management and coerced to work in the building. I was subsequently suspended for nine months for making one phone call for the president to the acting station manager at the time to inform her about the asbestos problem, because she had to leave the meeting.

The Professional Standards and Conduct Unit needs to be disbanded as fast as possible and be organised, in my view, to something like the Police Integrity Commission. I was suspended by the CEO for nine months and I was never interviewed by the Professional Standards and Conduct Unit. Yet, another person assisting the operations manager on the Central Coast can put out serious defamatory faxes to all staff from the sector office whilst he is on duty, to all stations in the area, post some notices on the noticeboard, and the Professional Standards and Conduct Unit does not stand him down—in fact, promotes him.

**CHAIR:** If you have some documentary information that needs to be distributed, we can do that, but we cannot—

**Mr HOGVEEN:** Yes, that is in my submission. So the Professional Standards and Conduct Unit takes on board what the CEO wants, what managers of the Ambulance Service might want—say, the divisional manager—and then they set out to prove what they want proved. They selectively carry out investigations, or do not carry out an investigation—they will interview some people and they will not interview others.

I complained about the operations manager on the Central Coast at the time bullying and harassing my staff to go back into Toukley station. The tools he was using to do that were: not approving leave, either long service or annual leave; cancelling the staff's meal-away-from-station penalties; not providing the staff with lockers for four or five months; and so on. The Professional Standards and Conduct Unit did not interview me and did not interview any of my staff—yet we were the complainants. It allowed the operations manager to write a letter saying that this is why he did this and this is why he did that, but it would not allow us to challenge that. His statements were false. But he was not stood down and moved. Yet, I make a phone call and I was. The Professional Standards and Conduct Unit does not operate professionally; it is a cover-up unit.

**CHAIR:** You have been re-employed?

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** Yes. I was moved from Toukley as the station manager and the union and staff representative for the asbestos dust. Because I was a strong voice for the staff, they got me out of the way. I was redeployed to Hamilton. I was never interviewed by the Professional Standards and Conduct Unit. They held an inquiry, found me guilty, and the CEO sent me away. He sent me away with a number of conditions. They were that I was to be mentored as the station manager so that I could learn to do the job properly. I had been the station manager since 1983.

When I got to the in a Hunter area, the operations manager there, Steve McPherson, said, "Steve, we don't have any issues with you. We know what your work is like; we are really happy to have you here." This goes to the point. That told me that I was being victimised, bullied and harassed by the CEO. He is the one who put the rubber stamp on this; he signed it off. What took place then? I was supposed to have mentoring and I was supposed to have mediation with unknown persons. Mentoring and mediation did not take place at all, and it still has not. For one year I had reports being written on me and sent to the CEO. At the end of that, the operations manager, Steve McPherson, wrote to the CEO and said, "Steve Hogeveen's position needs to be confirmed. He has been really great; he has done everything right. I have not had to speak to him, not once", that my work was basically fantastic.

My position should have been confirmed last November; it still has not been confirmed. And the CEO has deliberately withheld my service medals for 10 years and 20 years service. He has been asked by me for the medals. The HSU has written to him asking that he confirm my position and give me my medals; this was in February. He has failed to answer their letters. The bullying and harassment also went back to the operations manager on the Central Coast. I was awarded a clasp to the National Medal by the Governor General of Australia. Two years after I was supposed to get that, I phoned up and found out from the human resources division the status of where it was, and it was in the operations manager's desk. I had to get the New South Wales Police Service to get that medal for me, which was given to me by the Governor General of Australia. The CEO wrote to me telling me that Mr Dent had made a mistake, that he "should have given it to you". But he does not apply the same rules to himself: he still holds my medals.

I think I had better hand over to Tony, but just before I do, just to go to the crux of the way the ambulance service operates, I have got three medals here; they were all awarded to me by the New South Wales Parliament, and I thank you very much for the award of these medals: it is for my participation in the floods. The first one they got for me had my name spelt wrongly so they then said, "Keep that, we will get you another one". I then received one through the post and I received another one into my in tray. I only need one, thanks very much, and I will give you back the other two.

**CHAIR:** I am aware of the time, and a lot of that information is in your submission, but I can see Mr Weekes wants to make some comments. What we need to get to is some of the issues in terms of solving the problems.

**Mr WEEKES:** I am currently the president of the Brisbane Water sub-branch. I just want to reiterate what has happened. All the time and in the news just recently, which has upset me grievously, is that we have been trying to help our local Labor representatives to take over the whole Central Coast. We did not want to wash our dirty washing or anything like that, we just want to get ambulances to the Central Coast. That is all that this has been about. We have had a good working relationship up there and with everybody, all the community. We have had several meetings with organisers—it was not just about the asbestos, it was about the shortages of ambulances, and Jim will tell you about cars from Singleton to Toukley and a woman collapsed on the veranda. That is no mucking around. The actual car made it from Singleton to Toukley and she was still on the ground. The worst part of that is that it is like driving from here to Gosford on the siren: you would be doing about 120 or whatever it is to get up there to do it.

We have had meetings about this and what happened was I have discovered this victimisation, which goes back to when we went to Parliament House the first time. The documents are here but I will just put it in a nutshell. Yes, Mr Donnelly, I have been understanding what you are saying about being a witness, but that was not only our opinion; the CEO and Mr Rochford had to be helped out of this building because they deliberately lied and misled them, I am sure of it. That is not my opinion, that was about three or four Labor politicians too; they felt betrayed—Marie Andrews, Jeff Hunter, Milton, Grant McBride, the Minister for the Central Coast. This man absolutely misled them down the garden path and then Steve exposed him.

Since that happened we had a situation out of that incident: they decided to do an audit of all the ambulance buildings in New South Wales with asbestos, because we are working in amongst the stuff and it is falling amongst us. We have families too. My officers have a concern that they might get mesothelioma. We transport people; we see them dying in front of us, and it is terrible. You see people die of these conditions and lung conditions and taking their last breath. I have had a few die on me like that. It is pathetic. I do not wish anyone to die of it. Having seen someone die in the back of an ambulance trying to get breath and you cannot do anything for them: no matter how much oxygen you put in them they are dying, and it is a sad thing, and their families crying around you when you go to the house. I do not want to see any of my officers end up like that because of a lousy bloody building.

Marie Andrews and a few of the others were accused of saying, "Had you told us about this serious situation at Toukley and the money you have been wasting here, we could have got it in before the budget and we could have built a whole brand new station rather than put these people through it". So out of this came an audit. The ambulance service, in their wisdom, to Rochford's embarrassment, when they went to try to reopen the ambulance up they had spent the money Paul Crittenden—our local Labor man has been fighting for Toukley and keep paramedics on the coast—turned up there and when they went to go in, WorkCover found that it was totally unsafe. It was so embarrassing. They gave reassurances that it was okay to go in. It was not okay to go in: it was in the walls. They tried to infer that Mr Hogeveen planted it. How can you plant it in the damn walls or anything like that? It is impossible to plant asbestos in the walls.

So out of this came a vote. James and I have been trying to stop the problem and bring a solution to the problem. We have been working with John Della Bosca; we have been meeting with everybody. We said all right, there has got to be an audit, so we will get a representative from the Hawkesbury River Bridge to the Queensland border—as a matter of fact, the whole northern division ambulances. Three people can only be on this from the HSU but they had one representative on the whole northern division. No-one wanted to put their name up in the whole five sub branches. Only one person put his name up who understood the problems with asbestos—Steve Hogeveen. We put it around to every officer. Out of this came the most vile victimisation that I can ever account.

We had another meeting to go up here to Parliament House to meet again with the members of Parliament to try and get more staffing. So we came up here to Parliament House. When we came up here the union was contacted by one of the managers from the Central Coast who said that we did not distribute the vote properly. So I said to Steve, "Okay, don't tell anybody that you are the representative until I clarify it when we get back". He found out that this person—a manager up there—was trying to stop him from being the asbestos representative.

**CHAIR:** I am just conscious of the time.

**Mr WEEKES:** I know. I just want to say to you that out of this came a victimisation with these posters, where I was accused of giving away emails and things like that. But I am totally computer illiterate.

**CHAIR:** Would you like a table that document?

**Mr WEEKES:** I would.

**Document tabled.**

**Mr WEEKES:** I was totally computer illiterate: I do not know anything about emails, and Jim will tell you that; I am hopeless. I am still back in the old days. Anyway, I got concerned. That went around to all the ambulance stations and the hospitals—this is the manager. I went and made a complaint to the Professional Standards and Conduct Unit [PSCU]. I went down to the PSCU and said, "Look what this bloke has done. He

has put it through the workplace". This is an ambulance officer acting as a manager and he is doing all of this. What came out of it was very interesting. I went down there and I found out that the manager who put this all out was involved in the investigation of Mr Hogeveen. So I went and told them, and they said, "No, no, no, he is not involved". I said, "That's strange". I said to him, "Are you involved in it?" I said, "Is [REDACTED] involved in it?" And he said, "Yes, I think he is. I think I saw his name".

So I went back to tell them, and then [REDACTED], who was on the PSCU said, "I have the files in front of me. He's not involved". Well, guess what? He is. He is up to his neck in it, and the other chap was involved in it as well. They have done this cover-up. I went back to Rochford; I wrote letters to Rochford and they wrote basically trying to wash their hands of it and saying, "Why isn't he stood down?" They did not do anything; they tried to cover it up. All of it has been a big cover-up. I have gone to Robyn Kruk; I have gone to Bob McGregor and I have shown them. And not only that have they covered up, here is an interesting one. This bloke nearly committed suicide.

What happened was, two months after this fax came out I had a conversation with the manager; I wanted a copy of the transmission report. I said, "Where is a copy to see where these faxes went?" And he said, "I can't give it to you, the machine is playing up". Two months later this officer, [REDACTED]—he has just about blown a fuse up top through an incident—his private, personal record was faxed to 22 ambulance stations: the same officer involved. What happened after that was they said, "Will you write a letter saying that you had a conversation two months earlier?" I said, "Yes, I will". I wrote this letter to this family—I know I am running out of time—it goes to John Hatzistergos and, in faith, John Hatzistergos writes to the CEO.

The CEO sends a letter back. I will read it out to you: "Mr Rochford further advises that Mr Weekes' allegation that Central Coast operations manager stated during a conversation 8 May 2006 the fax machine was playing up cannot be substantiated. Mr Weekes suggested the machine was faulty as faxes received at the Central Coast did not print the date of sending it. He was informed by the Central Coast manager that all the fax machines have this standard function, but it cannot be switched off or on". The trouble is, Rochford has written a letter saying this but no-one has ever interviewed me. I had an ex-detective with me and I also had James Stirling, who will testify that this conversation did take place. There is no record of interview. How can Rochford send a letter and lie—and it is an absolute lie—to the Minister for Health when if you were the CEO you would have checked to make sure there was a record of interview. Writing something as serious as that in that letter—a letter to the family. That man disappeared for how many days? I forget now.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** Five or six.

**Mr WEEKES:** For five days they thought he had hanged himself.

**CHAIR:** And he was an ambulance officer?

**Mr WEEKES:** An ambulance officer.

**CHAIR:** Just so we are not going over information that is already in submissions, can we now get to a point where we can see that you have got the sorts of grievances that you have and the issues that you have raised in terms of the ambulance station and the management and the complaints unit. I notice, Mr Stirling, you have made some comments about ambulance numbers and stresses on staff. Could you give us some more information in terms of how that impacts on the situation on the Central Coast, which is a growing area?

**Mr STIRLING:** My main issue is that I view the Central Coast as basically the lost city, the lost children, or whatever. Just to take you back quickly—as you said, you are pressed for time: in 1999 there was a fairly big influx of staff to rural New South Wales. At that time the Central Coast was under Sydney, which was metropolitan. In early 2000 the superintendent, Eric Marks, removed seven vehicles and quite a number of staff—anything up to 23—back to North Sydney, because he knew in the wind that we were going to be restructured. About the middle of 2000 we were made rural New South Wales and then there was a massive influx of staff into Sydney—up to 200; I think they have just got another 250.

What we were looking at as a sub branch is that both North Sydney and the Hunter, even though both are very different types of areas, basically, they had twice the number of day shift cars, twice the number of night shift cars and they both had six or seven hospitals that were in close proximity, where in the Central Coast we had seven ambulance stations and two hospitals that are very far apart, and Gosford Hospital, as you are

probably well aware, has got double the waiting time of anywhere else. The Central Coast, and particularly the Woy Woy peninsula, has the highest concentration of elderly population, and of course with that, chronic illness, chronic disease.

There are many times, as Tony said before, that we cannot get crews to genuine callers. Obviously, in every job there are the fictitious—the people who do not really need it—but it does have a very, very adverse outcome. Steve in his family had a loss due to lack of staffing numbers. We have brought this up to Greg Rochford, Alan Loudfoot and the previous health Minister Morris Iemma when he was here: it has been identified numerous times, but basically with no result. Mr Rochford in 2003 made a statement to the public accounts committee—I think it was on page 29 of that. He identified the Central Coast as probably the worst area in the State. That was a great call. He also stated that we were going to get a fairly substantial inflow of staff, which we did: we got 40, and we are grateful for that. However, he also stated that the majority of those staff would not go to relief. Obviously, relief covers long service leave, annual leave, sick leave, long-term workers comp.

What happened was I think we got approximately 40 staff; 35 of those went to the relief roster. So it had an impact roughly of one or two cars over a 24-hour period, and that in itself is nowhere near sufficient. You are probably looking at double the workload per crew hour, and the Central Coast is what the Hunter is and what North Sydney is. As I said, they have got roughly 20 cars day, 20 cars night; so has the Hunter—very rough figures—where we are running 10 and 10, basically, or 14 and 10. As a result it puts pressure on staff. You would get episodes like [REDACTED].

**CHAIR:** We have heard great deal of evidence that staff are working long shifts with short breaks in between and are under pressure to get straight back out to the next job. Is it the same situation on the Central Coast?

**Mr STIRLING:** Yes. Honestly speaking, they are basically beyond crisis point. We only have 14 cars on the day shift. You might have three or four at Wyong, there might be up to six or eight at Gosford. You are waiting there and the controller is calling, "I need you to clear, I need you to clear." Quite often you have done two, three or four jobs where you have not completed your paperwork or your car is sort of half done and you have gone back out on the road. The service will tell you that there is a legal obligation, which is fair enough, to complete your paperwork true and accurate because if something comes back, obviously, you are going to be put up in front of educators, management or whatever. But they do not seem accepting of the excuse, "That was four jobs ago. I remember that day." We do not mind doing the true and accurate case sheets; that is great. However, we just want the time to be able to do them and not the continual pressure. There is no set time: it is not day; it is not night. It is the whole 24-hours spectrum where you are just on the go.

**CHAIR:** Clearly, from what you have said today, you have raised serious issues with the complaints unit and management in terms of staffing numbers and the stress that places on staff. Do you have any suggestions in terms of our recommendations to improve the service?

**Mr STIRLING:** Let me just say something and do not take this the wrong way. I have been personally involved in three reviews, none of which have got anywhere. It is always, "We will do a review into it and then we will make our recommendations." However, I can sit here and honestly tell you that people and the sector managers know where the problems are and how to fix them. There is no need to spend weeks, months—

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** Tell us they ways to fix them.

**Mr STIRLING:** You have to go around and talk to the staff at the ground level, at the coalface. A lot of times they go to these meetings and they have got piles and piles of data and a lot of it is inaccurate. I will give you one point that really blows it out. We can have a car to do a transfer from Gosford Hospital to Royal North Shore Hospital and the moment that car—

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** Is this a non-emergency transfer?

**Mr STIRLING:** Either one, it does not matter.

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** It could be because someone is too sick for Gosford Hospital, they have to go to Hornsby.

**Mr STIRLING:** This is how their data is calculated. The moment that officer presses "available" or completes the job at Royal North Shore, that is showing on their computer or their data adds that car as available in the area, even though it is an hour and a half or two hours from that area. They are looking at this and saying, "Oh yes, we have had three cars available between 2.00 and 4.00 a.m." But one of them might be at North Shore, one of them might be at Nepean, one of them is at RPA. We have gone through this many times in reviews. Different stations have different needs. Ettalong, for example, is just pure volume. Places like Bateau Bay there is a long turnaround time. It is in the middle of the two hospitals, Gosford and Wyong. This has been brought up many, many times. Have your little working group and go around to the people at the ground level and speak to the station officers and ask, "In the ideal situation what would you want?" As I say, it is going to be very difficult for people not to go overboard and say, "We need another five cars here". Obviously it will be up to the Committee to say no. Match it with your data, but look at how the data is flawed, look at the unique needs of a station. As I said, Bateau Bay has a long turnaround time. One job takes up to two hours at Bateau Bay.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** At least. If I can make a quick comment about how you can fix things up, the staff want safe places of work. We see the fire brigade getting beautiful buildings. In our area on the Central Coast we have got terrible old buildings that are not functional. The girls do not even have a shower to use at Toukley. They have got to go into the men's toilet, for instance. There is nowhere to get changed, and they have spent half a million dollars on this old building. There are other buildings on the Central Coast like that and all over the State. Give us nice places to work in, give us the vehicles and equipment that we need, make sure we have got that drugs for giving patients pain relief. We order drugs from the stores and we do not get them. The staff are absolutely horrified when they cannot treat their patients properly. We need the drugs, the stores, the vehicles and the equipment. We need enough staff so that our staff are not being flogged.

Shift after shift they go in, they do not get any lunch. On night shift they do not get their meal. It is countless times how many meals I have had to throw out because I have not been able to get back to the station. At a management meeting Mr Loudfoot told the station managers for the whole of the Hunter, "What you have due to is crack down on your staff sick leave because they are taking too much sick leave." He said, "Steven, what have you got to say?" I said, "The staff are being absolutely flogged. That is why they are having shifts off. They cannot cope any longer." He said, "No, that is not true." Well, it is true. The staff are being flogged because there is not enough of us there to respond to the amount of emergency calls and other calls that we have to do.

**Mr WEEKES:** I just want to say something before we finalise that this matter of incompetent management has been going on for a while. It led to a drastic situation in the Hunter, the Central Coast and the Northern Division where it was the first time in my 31 years that the Northern Division's manager had been taken to the director-general for bullying, harassment, total mismanagement. He has no conception. They brought him out from England and he has no idea of what is going on. I have never heard of it in my 31 years of a manager having to be taken to the Director-General's office. At that office it was really a serious situation. Jim is right that we are doing the same workload of other areas that have 20 cars and we have got 10 cars. I will just give you a little example and this will be the last that I am going to say.

One shift I started off at six o'clock at night. They sent me straight up to Wyong Hospital to get two patients to go to Sydney, to Prince Alfred and North Shore. At North Shore I got caught in a bed block and I was there for four or five hours, even though I am transferring a patient. I am on night shift, there is a car less. Then I got to Prince Alfred Hospital and got caught up with another bed block. About three or four o'clock in the morning I am still on the road. Then they gave me a job from St George Hospital to go to John Hunter Hospital. Tell me if this is bullying or harassment or whatever it is. I could fall asleep or my offsider could fall asleep at the wheel and we are all killed, including that pregnant woman.

I have the case here, I have it all here, I have got a lot of stuff here. I only hope that you people can call us back to sit down with a good time limit so that we can show you the stuff. It is 30 minutes. I appreciate, Ms Parker, the Labor people here, the Liberal lady over here and everyone else, and I am thankful that you gave us this opportunity. It is not to rub it in everyone's nose. Reba Meagher is saying that it is to do with the money issue at the moment that is going on. This is not about that. This has been going on a long time. We have got the documentation here. It is about the CEO. It is about his incompetence to deal with the practical matters. He really has to go, and the upper management. It is really a serious thing. This has got nothing to do with the money, I can assure you. We are concerned about the people. What upset me most of all was lying to our Labor people up there and lying to John Hatzistergos and all these people.



**CHAIR:** Thank you, I know it has been limited time. We have one more question to clarify an issue that has been raised about the S8 drugs.

**Mr WEEKES:** That is an important issue.

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** I have read your submission and I recognise the issue. This issue has come up before. Do you have a solution about the security of the S8 drugs? I understand there has to be a key in every ambulance or the system does not function.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** The security is blown right out the window from the time it leaves stores.

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** I understand the issue. We are trying to find a solution to the security issue. Each car has to have a key or you will not be able to access the drugs because there is no-one at the station to hand out the drugs.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** The problem is that the cars are used by unauthorised officers sometimes. There could be a little safe in each car and only officers authorised to use morphine or fentanyl use the drugs. There are officers on the cars at times that are not authorised to use those drugs. If they were locked, then they would always be available.

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** If the drugs disappeared, they would know who has the car.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** Each officer could have a key and they have to sign a register for each car.

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** It has got the two signatures.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** That does not happen in the Ambulance Service.

**Mr WEEKES:** That is right.

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** There is something you may not know about, they send the morphine out to many stations just with a courier through Australia Post. Australia Post leaves the morphine with the fire station next door or just leaves it inside the door.

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** I wanted a bit more outline about the S8s, because it had come up before and I saw it in your submission.

**CHAIR:** Did you say that sometimes you do not have access to the drugs that you need because of the supply?

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** That is correct, the supply runs out. We do not have any at the station and stores have told us it is unavailable. The staff basically have to get patients to bite down on a piece of old leather or something.

**Mr WEEKES:** That is true because what happened, a chap up in the Hunter had to ring up a radio station because they ran out of fentanyl or methoxyfluorane, a simple drug. Methoxyfluorane is the one in the green tube and they suck through that and it gives them a bit of a high. They ran out of it and rang up a radio station and Reba Meagher found out about it. The thing about it was that there were people in the ambulance and we had none of the stuff in stock and we had nothing to give them, people with broken legs and arms. We had nothing in stock.

**Mr STIRLING:** I think it is their contract arrangements.

**The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI:** The Police Force has a commissioner as its head. What are your thoughts about a commissioner of the Ambulance Service?

**Mr HOGEVEEN:** I think we should have a uniformed officer. We have had fantastic men in charge of the Ambulance Service. I will name them: Dave Chappell, John Ryan, Jack Hawkins. They ran an ambulance service which the staff were proud of. They were proud of their leaders and they looked up to them. Since we

have gone away from that the staff do not have any faith in the upper management of the Ambulance Service, we do not respect them and we want them gone.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for your evidence. I am sorry that the time has been limited. We appreciate your attendance. You will be asked whether you want your submissions to remain in camera or whether you want to read the transcripts and make that decision or have your evidence deidentified.

**Mr WEEKES:** I want to thank everyone. We appreciate that you have given the time to see us.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**