

Submission
No 159

**THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE NSW
AMBULANCE SERVICE**

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For a long time now, the Ambulance Rescue unit have had to live with the suspicion that we would one day be sold out and no longer be able to provide the exceptional rescue service to the public that we have since our establishment in 1954.

In this current climate our concerns as a group have grow even greater and I feel compelled to voice my opinion on this most important of subjects.

Points that must be considered:

- 1 NSW Ambulance Service rescue have been the pioneers of rescue in this state since the first recorded rescue/retrieval of a body at Sydney heads in 1941 , we are at the forefront of rescue development simply by the nature of the work encountered by ambulance officers on a daily basis.
- 2 NSW Ambulance Service rescue provide the most highly trained rescue professionals in this state that are proficient in all aspects of general and specialised land rescue. The rescue operators are regularly examined and trained to maintain and hone these skills which include single rope technique and chemical, biological and radiological incident management.
- 3 NSW Ambulance Rescue is the only rescue service that provides rescue operators that are firstly clinicians, which can make the difference between life and death. This was recently demonstrated in a case in Wollongong where a man in his 50's had a cardiac respiratory arrest working on a roof with his twin brother. The Wollongong Rescue Unit "199" was first

on scene and quickly accessed the patient "still at height on a roof", defibrillated the patient and continued resuscitation while considering and formulating a plan to extricate the patient from a difficult location. End result patient rescued from cardiac arrest on a roof and delivered to hospital (well within the "golden hour") with normal respirations and heartbeat. I honestly believe that should any other rescue unit have responded to this man, the patient's outcome would be most different.

- 4 All rescue situations have a clinical component and certain situations can result in difficult access to patients that require trained rescue personnel to overcome. This once again, highlights the need for rescue operators to be trained clinicians to avoid unnecessary delays in providing life saving medical treatment.
- 5 When working around trapped patients in MVA's the rescue team must have not only a mechanical understanding of the task at hand, but must be able to consider the prehospital management of a possibly or potentially serious injured patient. Once again, no other rescue squad can provide this level of understanding.
- 6 I find it hard to understand and accept how funding amongst the emergency services are distributed and get the impression that the services with the highest workload are the ones least supported financially.

- 7 Recently, the NSW Fire Brigade have suggested that they should be responsible for all rescue because they have the equipment, manpower and funding to do the job. This really is a poor justification for a rescue handover.

Surely we should examine the current situation and ask some logical questions. Is this simply an attempt by the fire brigade to justify a massively overbuilt empire of equipment that must surely have the lowest workload of all? Wouldn't it make more sense to have a closer look at what role the fire brigade are called on to play and adjust that system to suit?

Maybe with this approach, the Fire Brigade, who I believe, are fiscally draining on the taxpayer can be more accountable and therefore, take some budgetary drain off the system. The Fire Brigade's workload is such that officers have time to educate and attempt to encroach on other's territories other than their core business. This is made evident recently with the Fire Brigade self promoting their pre hospital care abilities under the guise of propping up an overworked Ambulance Service.

By the nature of the job Fire Officers are required to have a basic first aid ability but is this really any greater than an Ambulance Officer's requirement at fire fighting?

- 8 It must be highlighted that the NSW Fire Brigade appear to be selective about the rescue service they offer which does not include SRT abilities and this would therefore, raise the problem/situation of who

- would provide the additional services resulting in further interdepartmental management issues.
- 9 The NSW Fire Brigade appear simply to be empire building and aspiring to emulate the American style system. This is incorrect because that system is reliant primarily on privatised Ambulance Services which therefore places a different dynamic amongst the emergency services.
 - 10 The NSW Fire Brigade has attempted to justify their current role in rescue with their own statistics which are difficult to align against others who record workload according to allocated SOO numbers.
 - 11 The role of Ambulance rescue is broad and far ranging from rescuing the stranded assailer on a high cliff face to simply making a MVA scene (which can be potentially just as dangerous depending on conditions) safe for all persons involved, patients and emergency workers alike.
 - 12 With Ambulance rescue on the road the community have the added benefit of an additional ambulance unit equipped and ready to respond to any call for assistance .This of course is the saving grace of the ambulance service on a regular basis, when all other resources are tied up ,be it from work load or hospital block the rescue unit is able to attend. The skills mix provided with this system is of further benefit to the community by making it possible for the rescue truck to be utilised as a additional intensive care paramedic resource . So it can be seen that this is a practical rescue unit that is dynamic and flexible in it approach,

this again is something that any other rescue unit would find hard to compare with.

Our management team should be supporting and promoting rescue within the Ambulance service because it is clearly part of our core business , but it would appear they are simply more concerned with cost cutting (in the wrong areas).WHATS NEXT.

Our No 1 priority is that of our patient's successful management and rescue with the emphasis being on the effective and most practical rescue system.

John Mayfield
Ambulance Rescue Wollongong.