

Supplementary  
Submission  
No 37b

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

**Name:** Suppressed

**Date received:** 28/07/2008

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*Partially Confidential*

# The management and operations of the NSW Ambulance Service (Inquiry)

I refer to the uncorrected proof transcript that was heard before the committee on the 20 July 2008.

I notice on page 9 the question was posed in reference to the tripling of staff at the PSCU, this question was in fact very valid and saw a typical Service response that it "was already planned".

I have reviewed all of the advertisements for vacant positions for the Service since the commencement of this year and there has only been two positions advertised these being a temporary *replacement* position for 9 months (2 June 2008) and a 6 month temporary position (5 May 2008) where or when have the enhancement full time positions been advertised or is this just more smoke and mirrors? (Attached).

In relation to the complaints process I have personnel knowledge of a colleague whom has placed a complaint of serious misconduct and another of alleged assault on a patient and this Officer has not been approached by the Service for an interview and on one of these incidents has attended the PSCU in person on a number of occasions in an attempt to report it, however in typical Service fashion both Officers have either been promoted or allowed to act in a higher position.

I note that the first enquiry was committed by a number of persons, however there have been allegations been made against two of the members by my peers, this fits well into line with well investigate ourselves and the outcome will be good.

Page 10 Ms Crawshaw is not fully forthcoming to you, there was an offer of 8%, however this was only for certain classifications, for example PTO received nothing, Station Officer Classification actually lost money, myself as a Level 4 officer received 1%, so with the abolition of meal penalties which can account for some 30% or greater would in be in my interest to take a 29% pay cut? The proposal was so pathetic it never made it to the IRC.

On page 11 Mr Rochford states that the base rate of Ambulance Officers is relatively low, he then states that the wage is high by means of late meals call off meals and overtime. He then proceeds through the rest of the document to indicate that he wishes to abolish the same. So giving an overall picture that he wants Officers to revert back to the relatively low wage without penalties.

Penalties account for up to and greater than 30% of the fortnightly wage, the base wage for a 10 year Officer is \$51,412 pa Mr Rochford has stated that the average wage for an on road Officer is between \$80,000 and \$90,000 (this is not mine) however if this is the case focus on the amount of overtime, meals etc the average Ambulance Officer must be doing to attain this figure.

Mr Willis states on page 12 that the maximum shift length will be that of 12 hours, however this in effect is no change to the current system, he omits to give a guarantee

that after the completion of your rostered hours you will not be tasked to another irrespective of its nature. (as is the case in the UK and now in QLD). This then will see some stations day shift go from what is a 10 hour shift with overtime to a 12 hour shift with overtime further compounding the situation.

He then proceeds to say that it will give a less fatigue approach to rostering, under the current staffing numbers there is only so much that can be done, the night shift will be reduced to 12 hours however due to demand there will be overtime and we will be back to 14 hours again as well as increasing the length of the current day shift.

On page 13 Mr Rochford talks about Supervisors, at this time there (in my area) is no problem at the Station Manager level, the problem lies if an Officer chooses to seek the assistance of a Supervisor (District Officer level) in this aspect we have gone backwards, in 2000 prior to the restructure on road crews had access to a District Officer 24 hours a day, post restructure for the past 7 years they are available between 0700-2300 daily and this is a step backward. In relation to having more of these positions this also would show no improvement. The core issue is staffing and fatigue.

Page 13/14 The statement by Mr Rochford in reference to substantial staffing increases to rural areas is somewhat misleading, Mr Rochford told the public account committee in 2003 (wed Nov 5 page 29) that the Central Coast had the worst demand / staffing ratio in the state, he then states that the area would receive a number of staff that would not be used as relief but would be placed on the frontline to improve service delivery this has not been the case, this area received 40 staff which approx 35 went to relief bringing a net gain of one afternoon crew and a loss of 3 0800-1600 (mon-fri) and one 24 hour transport vehicle (rescue truck)

In terms of the said reviews ¶

have never seen any positive outcomes or any outcomes ever.

The statement that the New South Wales Fire Brigade is very different is not entirely the case. The NSWFB has population modelling software along with the latest data that clearly shows where a station should be constructed to provide an 8 minute response to 85% of the population to a given area. This is very relevant to our case. This system placed with the average number of cases per hour and the average hospital delay times will give very accurate data on where to place a station, how many staff and vehicles are required and what type of roster configuration should be used to best meet that demand.

In the last 8 years on the central Coast the NSWFB has constructed five new stations, and placed another 120 staff on the road.

Page 15 Mr Willis has told you that there is "an agreement" that staff forgo meal penalties on night shift to recline.

on many occasions we have asked the Service to produce that agreement, there is none it doesn't exist, the award however clearly states that there will be a break of one hour unpaid on a night shift but the penalties that are on day shift do not apply. In a recent study over a number of months on the Central Coast it was found that many crews were not receiving any downtime to well after the 6<sup>th</sup> hour of the shift.

Mr Rochford then states he wishes to reform the rosters even though he states earlier that the wage is poor without them.

The key issue here being fatigue, the introduction of these breaks is primarily so that when staff complain they did receive a break they can say you have been paid for it.

The Services proposal for 2 x 20 min breaks during the shift and roster reform sees the day shift getting longer 2 breaks which staff will not get most of the time, a decrease of the overall meal time by 20 mins no form of compensation for not receiving their meal.

Under the present system staff are compensated for not taking or completing their meal, this I feel is fair as the hours are long the job at times stressful and tiring. Taking a view from the Services prospective it there is a lot of emphases on fatigue how is it beneficial to reduce the overall meal break time and increase the shift length? It really is irrelevant how this issue is viewed it always returns to staffing numbers and increasing work load staff/demand mismatch.

Finally on page 16 Mr Rochford talks about Ambulance release teams (ART), the Central Coast in particular Gosford hospital has more man hours lost in bed block than any area in the state but not ART teams are used in this area, standing in delay lines for periods of greater than 3-4 hours also compounds this fatigue factor, should the Ambulance Form part of the emergency services portfolio then this would allow the Service to invoice the health department for lost man hours.