

Supplementary
Submission
No 61b

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

Name: Suppressed
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Partially Confidential

Inquiry into the management and operations of the Ambulance Service of NSW

I believe that a direct line of reporting from the highest uniformed Officer in the ASNSW to the Minister for Emergency Services (preferably, or the Minister for Health), as the other Emergency Services currently have, would *hopefully* put a stop to the practice of running the ASNSW like a business (which it is not), and instead have it run like an essential service, (which it is). I believe that the provision of quality pre-hospital health care to the public is worth every penny that is spent. Whilst I accept that the ASNSW (and NSWPF and NSWFB) should absolutely be subject to budgetary supervision and restraint in areas such as buying or leasing cars for bosses, buying office furniture and throwing Christmas parties, I find it deplorable that the provision of medical supplies essential to the provision of the health care that the ASNSW provides should be subject to being rejected due to "higher than average usage" or because suppliers have stopped supplying because they have not been paid. I hope and believe that if a uniformed officer reported directly to the Minister, with no "filters" between them, these inherent problems currently plaguing the ASNSW would be reported honestly, and not be understated or buried.

the issue of payment of meal penalties to Ambulance Paramedics in Sydney Division for disturbance of unpaid meal breaks. Whilst I admit that the payment of these penalties is worth between five and twenty thousand dollars per year to some Paramedics (depending on the location worked), and that most Paramedics find these extra wages desirable, I would argue that the retention of this system remains essential until such a time as Ambulance resources are increased on a day to day basis to match the current (and future) demand.

The reason is nothing to do with money. The reason is that they currently serve as a financial **penalty** to the ASNSW for disturbing the unpaid breaks Paramedics are currently entitled to OR not allowing them to start this break at all. In both instances this would obviously only be done where necessary to cover emergency calls. The Sydney Operations Centre (who have budgetary responsibility for payment of these penalties) already actively tries to prevent incurring these penalties, even going so far as to hold over tasking Ambulances to emergency calls for many minutes until the Paramedics finish their "unpaid" breaks. Despite this constant effort to stop the incurrence of these penalties, demand for Ambulance services in Sydney is such that it is impossible to stop completely and costs the ASNSW millions of dollars per year to cover these penalties alone. So if this monetary cost is the only disincentive currently in place for disturbing meal times, and it is not working, then I put to the

committee that should this disincentive be removed, the provision of meal breaks will become almost non-existent for Paramedics in Sydney. Crews will be flogged mercilessly because it won't cost the ASNSW any extra to do things that way. The current 10 or 12 hour day shifts (which are already most days 12 or 14 hour day shifts when you include overtime), will have to be endured without any break whatsoever. An increase in the basic wage of Paramedics would absolutely be welcomed, (and I believe deserved), but front line paramedics in Sydney view meal penalties as an altogether separate issue. The ASNSW has shown in the past that they are willing to force Paramedics to work harder and longer for less money if they can get away with it. I have no doubt that this would be the case without adequate protections in place to prevent this from occurring.

Thank you.