

Submission  
No 50

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

**Name:** Suppressed  
**Date received:** 23/06/2008

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Partially Confidential

The Director,  
General Purpose Standing Committee No 2,

Hi.

I would like to include an issue for your inquiry. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work at \_\_\_\_\_ Ambulance Station in the Illawarra. I have been an Ambulance Officer for \_\_\_\_\_ years and am an \_\_\_\_\_ Paramedic. For the past few years (but especially the last 8-9 months), I have been trying to get the Ambulance Co-ordination Centre at Warilla to be accountable for not responding the closest available resource to Casualty Jobs (HOT RESPONSES). There is a practice of responding a duty car from another area or from a fair distance away to casualty work in lieu of using on-call resources. Our management have stated that On-Call resources do not necessarily need to be responded to jobs if it is not deemed as necessary. This response has come from all levels of management including the District Officers, Assistant Divisional Manager, and even the State CEO. I have included a copy of a report that I submitted to the Illawarra sector Management on the \_\_\_\_\_ to which the reply has been minimal. I have other email replies from similar jobs that have occurred since this report was put together and am currently working on a submission to take to the HSU so that it can go to Work-Cover for a ruling as to the whether this is a safe work practice. Ambulance Management does not want this to occur. These can be added if necessary. The Ambulance Service of NSW believes that this isn't an OH&S issue and appear to have adopted the response that if you shoot the messenger (me) then the message will no longer get through. I hope this issue is clear for you to understand and I will cut and paste a summary of it for you.

### THE ISSUE:

- • **Responding out of area ambulances to areas covered by available on-call (or other closer cars) for hot responses.**

I believe this is an issue that has become entrenched in the Southern Operations Co-ordination Centre. Pro-QA is a computer aided dispatch system that is designed to protect the Coordinator (and the ASNSW) when they dispatch resources to jobs. It allows the computer to allocate a response category to the job (based on answers given by the caller) and then this dictates the resources that are responded. Jobs range from 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B etc down to R7. I believe that any response to a Priority 1 response must be from the closest resource as it requires an emergency response (lights and sirens). If this is not the case then Pro-QA contravenes the Ambulance Service of NSW OH&S policy. This process of responding ambulances further than is necessary under emergency response conditions not only puts the ambulance officers at increased risk of injury or accident, but also the general public and the patient. There is also the moral and legal obligation of the Ambulance Service of NSW has to get an ambulance to the scene ASAP. I have read our OH&S Policy and know that this practice breaches it.

This can only be a cost saving measure. If it genuinely doesn't warrant using the closer resource then it should have been downgraded to a 2A response so that it is only responded to under normal driving conditions. I don't have a problem driving where-ever I get sent at normal speed, but I draw the line at running to emergency jobs when I know there is a closer car available. We can all name cases when this has happened in the Illawarra.

For the protection of our coordination colleagues who are already under extreme pressure to make these decisions, it should be policy that "the closest car (including on-call) is responded to all Hot responses". This must be implemented as a matter of urgency as it is only a matter of time before MORE people die, or ambulance officers injured, as a direct result of this practice. I believe that this issue would be one that work cover would rule must be adhered to and am willing to go further if this issue is not dealt with satisfactorily. I have recently brought this issue up with Sector Management and CAD but am still waiting to hear back from them with regards to what outcome has been achieved. The staff that I have spoken to in the area support this matter fervently, and wish it to be resolved.

## **THE SOLUTION**

**1A, 1B, 1C – RESPOND CLOSEST RESOURCE TO ALL HOT RESPONSES INCLUDING ON-CALL OR DOWNGRADE THE JOB TO A 2A IF NOT WILLING TO USE ON-CALL.**

**(Pro QA is the system implemented to protect the coordinator when they allocate jobs to Ambulances. By overriding this system the coordinators are placing themselves at direct risk of legal ramifications should something go wrong? )**

**There can not be any other result.**

All of the above information has come from letters to management or the OH&S committee. This practice is still happening and management do not appear to want to address it nor fix it. Each time it is brought up with Southern operations or Sector management, the Ambulance Officer is the one who is made to feel like we are troublemakers. There have been too many jobs to list where this has happened and undoubtedly this HAS lead to some poor patient outcomes. Southern Operations are under pressure to meet there KPI's which tell them to get a car on a job ASAP (I think between 3-5 minutes) and it doesn't matter where this car comes from (10 -20 minutes or kilometres away) or if there is a closer car. This is in direct conflict with the need to be fiscally responsible and use a duty car as opposed to an on call car (which incurs a cost). I feel that apart from yourselves and work cover I have nowhere else to address this issue. I have addressed this issue to all levels of management without a satisfactory reply or resolution. More lives will be lost if this practice continues.

Please feel free to contact me with regards to this or any other information. Thanks for your time.