

Supplementary  
Submission  
No 155a

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

**Name:** Mr Peter Chance

**Date received:** 29/07/2008

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## **The Chair**

### **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2.**

#### **INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE**

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES AMBULANCE SERVICE**

**Peter R Chance**

**District Inspector Ambulance Service NSW (Ret)**

**This is an addendum to my original email.**

**First I would mention my dismay at the fact this committee is made up totally from members of political parties, I would have thought that at least one senior member of the health service union, and one serving ambulance officer would have been part of the process.**

**On perusing the minutes of the hearing of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July the one thing that stood out was the almost identical ideology of,**

**IAN MICHAEL PETERS, Acting Director, Workforce, Ambulance Service of New South Wales,**

**MARIAN FRANCES O'CONNELL, Director, Professional Standards and Conduct, Ambulance Service New South Wales**

**DEBORA MARGARET PICONE, Director General, NSW Health,**

**MICHAEL DEAN WILLIS, General Manager, Operations, Ambulance Service of New South Wales.**

**GREGORY JOHN ROCHFORD, Chief Executive, Ambulance Service of New South Wales,**

**and that is one of Self preservation. The unfortunate part of the committees questioning was that the cross examining was based mainly on the prepared statements of the individuals and not in depth questions as to the core problems being experienced within the ASNSW.**

**I am convinced that in the end the NSW Government will do what they have always done, and that is to bury their collective heads in the sand and beat there chests and say it is too hard to fix when it comes time to make a decision as to what action should be implemented to pull the service out of its malaise.**

**On reading some of the submissions lodged by serving and past ambulance officers one thing stands out to me more than any other matter, and that is the almost systematic removal of all that was the good and proud in the ASNSW, it is now a poorly run business headed by probably the most incompetent group of self serving individuals I have ever been aware of, this culture of bullying and lack of concern to operational staff has replaced respect and empathy.**

**As a former district inspector I had pride in what I did, and my staff was the most important aspect of my work.**

**Now it would seem that they are an inconvenience. Bullying was almost unheard of, people were treated with respect, and problems or complaints were investigated by uniformed officers who had many years of service and knew how to handle the myriad of different situations that would arise in the workplace, that, with a bit of common sense could be resolved with little or no effort. Other complaints of a more serious nature were investigated in-depth and thoroughly, but always fairly to my knowledge, staff were not just suspended and left in limbo at the whim of the CEO or the apathy PSCU, nor were they immediately financially penalized.**

**This has been replaced by the Professional Standards and Conduct Unit, from what I have read and as I still maintain contact and friendships with a**

**number of Officers there is little in this title that is applicable as either, Professional, having high standards, Or conduct themselves in a professional and concerned way.**

**Now it seems every thing is a major crime taking months or more to resolve, suspensions seem to be the norm, at times without the officer being informed of the totality of the situation they are being accused of.**

**While paying lip service to combating stress and bullying, the truth seems to be that the excessive workloads, lack of direction of the service, and the attitude of the CEO and the rest of the senior management to their staff are a major contributor.**

**The NSW Police Service has a history of looking after it members, a case in point is the dreadful events of the last few weeks, a grandfather killed his wife and two grandchildren and also severely injured his daughter a serving police officer, the amount of support given to that officer from the Police Commissioner down was an example to us all of how we should look after our people, he attended the funeral and a full police service with honor guard was provided, I wonder what we did for our dead.**

**My father in law William Arthur Harris who along with Ces Abbot (retired Commissioner of Police) were the founding members of the NSW Police drug squad, they were honored with a commendation just recently at the ages of 87 and 93 respectively for their service to policing, that is the difference in honoring and respecting officers between the police and the ambulance service.**

**Can you imagine the NSW Police service or the NSW Fire Brigades having the most senior person in that service with the title of CEO and not a uniformed officer? I believe all hell would break loose, yet that is what the ASNSW has to tolerate.**

**Can you imagine the police service or the fire brigades being attached to the department of health and not the department emergency services again all hell would break loose.**

And most frightening of all is the current minister of health, the incomparably incompetent Reba Meagh who after presiding over the demise of the hospital system along with Morris Iemma and a couple of others she now wants to dismantle the Ambulance Rescue service, the same service Eric Marks and Myself fought so hard to retain and maintain many years ago along with the HAREA union as it was known.

I am not for one minute saying that all was good and perfect during my service time of 25 years, there were many problems but in the end they were sorted out, some with good results and some not always so good, But! we always maintained a standard of patient care that was second to none, our Paramedics were second to none, our Rescue and Seat were second to none, we had our difficulties we fought for our rights as Ambulance Officers, but we knew that the people we battled, who were in positions of power were at least serving officers and had an idea of the problems faced.

Now it seems to be a case of people who have their heads in financial ledgers and no idea of what goes on in the real world of the Ambulance officer, making decisions based on what is best for them and their survival.

My good friend for over thirty years the late Deputy Metropolitan Superintendent (Ret) Eric Marks, once told me over lunch that the time of the ambulance service as we knew it was gone the way of the dinosaur, the incumbent administration at Rozelle was hell bent on reinventing the service and what the end result would be was frightening, he was absolutely disgusted with the CEO G Rochford, and predicted that he would (Eric) be moved on as soon as they could find an excuse. I am afraid they may have done just that.

Look at the submissions received by the inquiry, you can smell the fear of current officers, should their names be known even with this type of commission they know that they would be suspended or worse, is this the type of service we want.

If anything good can come from this inquiry, hard decisions have to be made, and made quickly.

**It is solely my opinion but if this government wants an ambulance that the serving officers can once again be proud of then I believe that things have to change and quickly.**

**1/ The current CEO should be dismissed and the position needs to be disbanded, and a return to a uniformed position as the highest position in the ASNSW.**

**2/ Staff levels need to be increased to meet the current crisis and an ongoing staff review for future staffing levels.**

**3/ All department heads should be of Superintendent Rank and serving officers not beaurocrats , this would help with the lack of promotion that appear to have stalled the advancement potential of the service.**

**4/ Rescue must be maintained as this is amongst the best in the world.**

**5/ The ASNSW should be placed under the auspices of the Emergency services banner not the department of health.**

**Yours truly,**

**Peter R Chance**