

**Submission
No 168**

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

Name: Mr Gerard Martin MP on behalf of Mr Timothy Castle

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**Submission to Review of The Ambulance Service of NSW Prepared By
Gerard Martin MP, Member For Bathurst**

The following in relation to the treatment by the Ambulance Service of NSW of Timothy Castle, an experienced ambulance paramedic based at Bathurst Ambulance Station is an example of the bullying culture exhibited by management to staff, who they are in dispute with or as in this case have suffered serious injury while on duty.

The incident in the case of Tim Castle occurred on the 21st of August 2002, while he was one of two ambulance officers on duty at a motocross event at Mount Panorama. Tim who had previously raced motorbikes had undertaken these duties many times in the past and the race organisers recognised the advantage of his motorbike racing experience. On a number of occasions Tim Castle had raised the question with senior management of the NSW Ambulance about the need to do a risk assessment for this type of event. Management ignored his request and said there was no need for the assessment and he should just carry out his duties. Tim Castle was prepared to provide expert detail of the areas that needed to be addressed in the risk assessment. His superiors did not accept his offer.

At the motocross event of the 21st of August 2002, Tim Castle became very concerned after there had been accidents in three races. He attempted to contact the clerk of the course to voice his concerns and have the race under way stopped. He was unable to make contact with the Clerk of the Course from the ambulance so he alighted to walk to the Clerk of the Course, but in doing so was hit by a competing motorbike. He suffered serious injuries, and was admitted to the ICU unit at Bathurst Base Hospital.

It was from this point that Tim Castle alleges management of the NSW Ambulance Service let him down. There were problems with the information flow to WorkCover and it was only after intervention by the Health Services Union that it was discovered the responsible management officer from the western region had not completed the necessary paperwork for WorkCover. The workers compensation rehabilitation coordinator appointed also did very little to assist Mr Castle. Mr Castle was unhappy with the assessment of what compensation he would receive under the WorkCover system and so elected to run a civil claim against the event organiser Panorama Cycle Club. Unfortunately, the judge ruled against Mr Castle citing public liability law and the need to take responsible care. The decision came as a devastating surprise to Mr Castle and his legal team. Although he was advised that he had good grounds to appeal Mr Castle because of the danger of further financial losses, decided he could not take the risk.

It had always been Mr Castle's wish to return to his career as a paramedic and he made a number of approaches to management of the NSW Ambulance Service to see what the possibilities were. Because of his back injury he could not return to normal duties but he believes he has much to offer in a number of roles such as training, or a range of administrative duties. At no time did he receive any support from management but claims on a number of occasions he was abused and spoken down to and got the distinct impression that the NSW Ambulance Service management was not interested in assisting him.

The rehabilitation coordinator appointed by WorkCover's insurance provider was of little assistance to Mr Castle. NSW Ambulance had no interest in trying to have his rehabilitation programme improved to give him some chance of being able to return to his career as an ambulance officer. Subsequent representations to the State Minister responsible have seen attempts to improve this situation but there has been no involvement by the ambulance service.

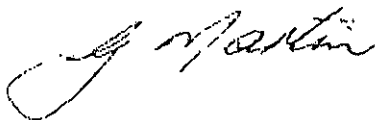
The five years since the accident occurred have been extremely stressful for Mr Castle and his family. He has had to contend with serious physical and psychological injuries and has worked extremely hard to overcome them. He has had to endure serious financial hardship due to the significant loss of salary and the need to pay heavy legal bills. There is the possibility that Mr Castle could lose his family home.

I have been made aware of other ambulance officers in similar circumstances to Mr Castle being treated in the same way. I believe the example of Mr Castle points to the urgent need for the management of the NSW Ambulance Service to show a greater level of concern in these circumstances and recognise the value of such employees, firstly as people, and secondly as employees that the State has invested heavily in bringing to their level of professional expertise.

I am aware of a number of incidents in an adjoining electorate, where there have been serious instances of on-the-job bullying by fellow ambulance officers with management at a regional level ignoring the issue.

I believe that in your review of the operations of the Ambulance Service of NSW you should take into account the impact of circumstances such as I have outlined above, have on the efficient operation of the service, particularly as at the end of the day it will have an effect on the quality of service delivered to the public.

Yours faithfully



Gerard Martin, MP
MEMBER FOR BATHURST