

Submission
No 1

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

Name: Ms Alicia Grant

Date received: 19/05/2008

The Director, General Purpose Standing Committee No 2,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

To whom it may concern,

Re: INQUIRY INTO THE
MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE NSW
AMBULANCE SERVICE

I am writing to make an official submission regarding the inquiry into the management and operations of the NSW Ambulance Service in particular staff recruitment, training and retention.

I currently work for NSW Ambulance as a Patient Transport Officer in the Sydney Division. I have recently completed the Bachelor of Clinical Practice (Paramedic) degree at Charles Sturt University for which I achieved sound results.

I feel I have been treated unfairly by NSW Ambulance in regards to recruitment. I have been attempting to gain employment with NSW Ambulance as a Paramedic for the past 6 years with no luck regardless of the time and effort I have put into education, work experience and a proven commitment to a career I am passionate about. During this time I have seen people employed by NSW Ambulance that are less qualified and less committed to this career whilst I have been unsuccessful on every attempt despite passing the required aptitude and psychological testing, completing a Paramedic degree and already working for NSW Ambulance as a Patient Transport Officer. I do not understand how I can not meet their criteria for a position as a paramedic.

As part of the Paramedic degree I completed 15 weeks internship with NSW Ambulance. During this time I worked closely with an ambulance crew as a third person doing every task that is expected of an ambulance officer, within my level of training. I achieved excellent results and this only made me more determined and passionate about a career as a paramedic. I gained experience in many things from communication, dealing with patients and their families, but most importantly I gained an excellent insight into what is expected of a paramedic in NSW. I witnessed events that only an ambulance officer would see, such as, cardiac arrests, child births and deceased patients, yet I still have an unwavering desire to be a paramedic. However, this is unimportant and insignificant to NSW Ambulance.

I can provide examples of applicants that have been successful whilst I have been unsuccessful. I am not here to ruin anybody's reputation therefore information is limited to specific facts of job suitability and experience.

Examples of successful applicants:

1. 21 year old female. Failed paramedic university degree. Expelled from nursing degree for breaching patient confidentiality. Offered a position with NSW Ambulance despite still being on a provisional licence. Given until the completion of the initial 8 weeks training to obtain full driving licence and medium rigid truck licence.
2. 35 year old male. Offered a position with NSW Ambulance despite being on learners licence for 14 years! Only recently on full drivers licence. Grossly overweight. Failed physical and medical examination twice. Suffers from severe asthma. Given final opportunity to pass medical and physical exam for which he saw his "doctor friend" who passed him as fit and healthy after manipulating some results and providing medications to mask his medical condition.
3. 30 year old female. Offered position with NSW Ambulance. Failed the initial 8 week (level one class) twice. Given third opportunity to complete the initial 8 weeks training but failed to show up on the first day.
4. Patient transport officer offered a paramedic position. Failed the medical exam for high blood pressure. Passed medical exam on second attempt despite no further investigation into his medical condition. Commencement of training has been delayed for 6 months. Will commence training in July.

For the intake I have been recently rejected for, I have witnessed numerous applicants be offered a position, commence the initial 8 weeks training but fail to complete the course and progress through to on-road duties. I have witnessed one applicant be punished for cheating on a paramedic exam but given a second opportunity to complete another 8 week class. I have one example of an applicant fail the 8 week course twice then given a third opportunity to complete the course, despite the fact he is in his 50's.

I do not understand how I am not meeting NSW Ambulance criteria whilst these applicants are. They have no experience or education involving pre-hospital care. I believe I am a high quality applicant who deserves one chance at a paramedic career in my home state of NSW instead I am left to pursue a career in Victoria and Queensland.

It is also important to note that I have been offered a paramedic position with Queensland Ambulance and have an interview for Rural Ambulance Victoria in the coming weeks, whilst NSW Ambulance are not interested in offering me a paramedic position despite already working for them as a Patient Transport Officer. I have proven myself to be a hard worker who is willing to work in any position for NSW Ambulance. However, I am left with no choice but to look interstate to pursue my career as a paramedic.

I believe NSW Ambulance recruitment strategies are out of date and inadequate. They are continually employing people not suited to the job who are failing to continue with a paramedic career for more than a few years. The current "burn out rate" for NSW paramedics is approximately 3 to 5 years.

NSW Ambulance selects successful applicants on the spot and informs the applicant of their success during the interview! I do not understand how this can be acceptable or accurate in selecting the right people for the job.

I understand from recent media reports that Paramedics in country areas are holding industrial action in regards to paramedics responding alone to incidents due to inadequate staffing numbers in rural areas. During my interview I made it clear I was interested in working at a rural station after the completion of my initial probationary period and would continue to work in country areas throughout my career. However, NSW Ambulance persists in employing people not interested in working at rural stations, preferring to work in Sydney.

It is a condition of employment that after the initial 12 month probationary period employees should be willing to relocate to one of the 42 rural stations for a period of time. The majority of employees work at these stations for only a few months until a position becomes available in Sydney. Wouldn't it make sense to employ people who want to work in country areas?

I thank you for reading my submission and I look forward to the results of this inquiry. I am more than happy to discuss this letter in more detail if required.

Yours truly,

Alicia Grant