

Submission  
No 102

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

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Partially Confidential

# Submission – Management and Operations of the Ambulance Service NSW

I am a Paramedic currently based at \_\_\_\_\_ station in \_\_\_\_\_

I have been in the service for a period of 2 years. Through this time I have seen and learnt some of the ways that the Ambulance Service of NSW operates.

As a Level 2 officer, I am very young in my career as a Paramedic. I have worked in a few different industries including \_\_\_\_\_ before applying to be a Paramedic. Being a Paramedic is a rewarding career and I am privileged to provide an essential service to the community. I enjoy several aspects of the job along with the ongoing training that is needed to build up a sound clinical knowledge.

With saying this I am concerned and I have personally experienced several problems with the **Permanent Posting Process** for Paramedics.

Some of the issues are as follows -

## **Location and Accommodation.**

As a Level 2 Paramedic you are experiencing responding to jobs without your training officer. A training officer was with you every single day in your first 10 months of the job. For many officers including myself, having to use your skills and knowledge buy yourself can be an overwhelming task. You are now responsible for decisions made on the road which could potentially impact on a patient's outcome. If working in the Sydney environment you have back up if needed, this is a totally different story in the bush.

I was placed for my level 2 posting to a station located in Ardlethan. Ardlethan is only a town of 300 people. I was unable to locate my family to this location due to their being no employment for my partner with also no facilities such as a Doctor, Dentist or even a supermarket which is open 7 days a week.

Accommodation in many of these small towns is a problem. Other services in remote areas such as teaching or police have accommodation provided for them along with other services, internet and phone for example.

I realise that remote stations have to be filled with officers. I have spoken to a lot of people in these areas and the same question keeps coming up. Why does the ASNSW not recruit locally?

## **Single on call responding.**

Living in Ardlethan and several small towns around the Riverina, you are required as a Paramedic to work on call duties as a single officer. As mentioned above this can be a daunting task as a Level 2 officer, let alone being 65KM from the nearest back up or hospital facilities. On several occasions I have had to respond to different medical situations including some serious motor vehicle accidents as a single officer.

This is a huge learning curve especially when you are still not even 12 months into the job and having this responsibility.

## **Emotional and Financial Burden.**

A lot of time spent at these stations is spent on applications trying to get out. 2 of the issues that impact most officers are emotional strain and financial burden.

The emotional strain that this caused is due to most people being sent from a totally different part of the state to somewhere that they don't know, pack up their lives and relocate to a foreign town. Often family are not able to join officers as accommodation does not meet the needs of the families, or partners can not obtain work.

I have been in a long distance relationship for over a year now and it is not an easy task to ask anyone to do. Along with not having the family and friends support network, it is a physical drain of travelling back and forth to see your family on days off.

I know of several officers that complete a day shift then drive 600km to Sydney to be with loved ones. This is only sometimes for a 48hour period then has to drive back down to start work the next morning.

With this travel brings fatigue issues. Officers put in this position are burning the candle at both ends to try to balance a work life as well as maintaining relationships and contact with family and friends.

The financial burden comes with the extra costing of travelling as well as paying for rental accommodation that they are not necessarily using. In my current location I have been sent to several different stations to cover shifts for officers that have moved on or resigned from the job. I am currently paying out for rent in but within months I have only had shifts based in Station. At a cost of per month to rent a unit for 3 nights this is a costly venture, especially when you are paying out for a mortgage in Sydney.

## **Application Process for Transfers.**

As a level 2 Paramedic, there is very little guidance offered to officers about how to apply for positions vacant that are advertised in Sirens (A publication distributed to Paramedics fortnightly). I thankfully have a very supportive District Officer who guides you through this process.

Every selection panel has different requirements of each applicant.

If you get feedback from the convenor they will tell you one thing that was missed out in your application, but the next panel might be looking for that specific wording that is required to obtain that position.

An issue with a lot of Level 2 officers is that several people are being given positions in Sydney stations straight from school, whilst people who have spent time in the bush and have done the hard work are not given a fair chance to return to the city if desired.

If the Ambulance Service of NSW is going to retain people they really need to be organised and be up front with potential paramedics.

Day 1 they need to say you will be going to ..... for a period of 6 – 12 months then you will be returning to Sydney/Newcastle if desired or visa versa for people wanting to go to the bush. Not get a letter a few days or weeks before being told that you are going to ..... station in the country and your mate in the same class gets Sydney who wants to go country.

A comment from an officer who has been in the job for some years said "Isn't it funny that 20 years ago the service was more organised than what they are now"

A Paramedic is a fantastic job and we provide an excellent service, but wouldn't it be better for all if the employees of the Ambulance Service of NSW were all happy and treated fairly.

Paramedic