

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

Name: Suppressed
Date received: 4/07/2008

Partially Confidential

Hon Robyn Parker MLC (chair)
General Purpose Committee No.2
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

03/07/08

Madam,

Firstly I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to make comment. I feel that the Ambulance Service has been coming apart at the seams for many years, with lack of clear direction, bullying, harassment and old boy's club mentality.

I have been in the ASNSW for years and during that time I have been an active member of the Union, and as such have been seen to be a thorn in the Ambulance Service side. My integrity sees that I will expect and not accept any thing less than equal and fair treatment for all Ambulance Officers; but unfortunately this is and has not been the case with the ASNSW. I have been offered promotions by the Management in the past directly because of my involvement in the Union, and when these offers were not taken up, Management resorted to threats and intimidation to the point where I have been charged – have been found guilty - and have had a penalty imposed without having been given an opportunity to defend myself of charges. When I tried to appeal these charges, I was directly told that if I did so, I would be dealt with as a disciplinary action and could lose my job. I feel that clearly the ASNSW is trying to control my Union activity with these threats trying to buy me off as they have done with other Officers in the past with the offers of promotions and training courses.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

There is no definite Management structure; the Service is constantly having restructures upon restructures. It is clear that they never complete what they start and that they do not have well thought out plans they only have goals with no plan how to obtain the goal; the only management tool they use is crises management "we will worry about it when it happens". This is no way to operate a service this size but what can you expect when buddies promote their buddies rather than the best person for the job. The system we work under has low and middle managers having a great amount of responsibility with little or no control over what happens, everything has to be cleared from above which results in delays and ineffective management being unable to react to a constantly changing dynamic service. This style of management also results in huge amount of public money, time and effort being spent on ineffective management, rather than equipment training and staff that would benefit the community that we are here to serve.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION

STAFF RECRUITMENT

We seem to be mostly recruiting the right type of person, but there are a certain number of recruits that are in the service as job to do until they find something better, this clearly is not that sort of job. We need Officers who see this as a career with a future and committed to serving the people of NSW and are willing to go the extra yard when required, rather than doing what they paid to do and that's all.

TRAINING

The induction training and the level of training on the whole is of a world standard, but it is the ongoing training and opportunity for Intensive Care Paramedic training that is lacking in today's service. The standard of clinical control and competence is of a very poor level when compared to the service of 10 to 15 years ago. Very competent Officers never get the opportunity to progress because the ASNSW has no clinical direction and they keep moving the goal posts, we are being lead by people who have no idea what we do or how we do it, as well as no respect for the Officers that do it. There are so many levels of training in the Service today that it has lead to a state of confusion and Officers being only part trained in life saving skills and Officers lost in the system.

RETENTION

The above two situations have resulted in a poor retention of new and junior staff and management does not seem to be concerned as plenty more people are waiting to join the Service. This you would agree is a costly waste of time and money, surely it would be more cost effective to improve training opportunities and job conditions so as to retain this costly resource and to be more human and flexible with the staff.

STAFF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

The ASNSW has all the systems in place and they tick all the boxes as set down in the legislation, but they are not truly committed to it if it is going to cost anything. The ASNSW only answer is that they do not have the funds to fix it, we are constantly being expected to operate with broken, missing or sub-standard equipment. An example would be rainware that does not keep you dry, jackets that do not keep you warm or a uniform that has a fire retardant that washes out. The list just goes on and on, not to mention the vehicles we are suppose to work in, or the run down Stations we operate out of.

OPERATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

The changes to the Mental Health Act, is putting Officers at a higher risk, but the ASNSW shows little if any concern, the service is also still sending single Officers to stand by at cases and the police are not responding in a timely fashion. This results in Ambulance Officers undertaking duty that is dangerous and not our responsibility. When we suggest we should not respond until the Police are on location, the only reply is "are you refusing duty?".

The ASNSW is not responding the nearest car in all cases to an emergency as this may involve calling a crew out and incurring a cost, so they send a duty car that is further away and expect the Officers to speed and put them selves and the community at risk so the ASNSW can save money but delay a car being on location by not using a closer car.

Again the list goes on and on, when will something be done to rather then just putting systems in place that do not work or are set up not to work.

ANY OTHER RELATED MATTER

I am willing to meet with any committee to further discuss the sad but true state of the Ambulance Service of NSW. I wish this to be treated with confidence as I do as do other Offices have a fear of retribution..