

**Submission
No 80**

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

Name: Mrs Elaine Singleton

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Best-practice rural ambulance provision needed now

Bundeena is in metropolitan Sydney. Its 2500 inhabitants live deep in the 160sq.km. Royal National Park, 21 kms from the nearest highway. The Park receives approaching 4 million visitors annually. Bundeena has no ambulance station. It has no police station. Currently the excellent doctor works 32 hours a week. Government guidelines show a doctor:patient ratio of 1:1100 Eastern Sydney averages 1:763, Northern Sydney averages 1:400. Bundeena's weighted ratio is 1:3125. There is no out-of-hours emergency medical service
There is a duty of care to all of these people - a duty of care by Federal and State Government and by National Parks

Forget the history:-

Since 13/05/08 Bundeena has had no dedicated ambulance service and no ambulance personnel. Previously, ambulancemen resident in Bundeena, over and above their normal roster and overtime, volunteered to provide a when-available 24/7 ambulance call-out service to their grateful community

These were unsustainable work practices - ambulancemen will move/retire. There are important H+S issues for ambulancemen and their patients. Chronic fatigue will affect ambulancemen's health and their work capability - It was an inappropriate approach to the problem. I do not subscribe to the view that NSWAS has engineered this crisis, that after 15+ years they think have made a mistake or have bowed to others and sought to stop ambulances being taken home. I just think it is incompetence

Forget the disputed figures:-

ASWAS have quoted low call-outs from Bundeena to justify their no ambulance station at Bundeena stance. Their figures do not include all calls from within the Royal National Park, nor do they include those residents who, aware of the ambulancemen's unavailability or unwilling to wait for an ambulance "from the mainland", drive themselves to Sutherland Hospital or take the Cronulla ferry for emergency treatment. MP Paul Mcleay quotes 2.5 million Royal Park visitors. The true figure is nearer 4 million - most of whom visit Bundeena. Tolded visitors are only counted 8am to 4.30pm for 7 months and at weekends for 5 months. Not included are visitors travelling through the Park. No hikers, train passengers, sailors from the Port Hacking waters or visitors on the hourly Cronulla ferry are included

Forget inadequate funding and staffing issues:-

Why proudly declare a Budget surplus of a third of a BILLION dollars 2006/7 when you cannot protect the lives of your citizens, your voters. What country and what year are we living in ?

Forget first-aiders as first responders:-

No community expects nor accepts what is proposed by NSWAS - a first-aider on your doorstep instead of the requested ambulance. A defibrillator is the single most important life saver- first-aiders are not trained in their use. They could not offer treatment if a collapsed person was found. In most call-out situations it would be an inappropriate, useless response, a waste of resource and a possible aggravation to the incident

Forget that Bundeena has an ambulance problem:-

Rural ambulance provision is a country-wide and world-wide problem. The Parliamentary Inquiry should order a survey of world wide best practice. Rural communities expect adequately resourced ambulance services that are able to respond quickly to their needs with well trained staff who behave in a professional manner. The question is how can this be achieved not if it is expected. Expectations and needs are no different to those living in central Sydney. Community

expectation is the same in Bundeena as it is in Bondi. Care must be taken not to impose urban solutions on rural people. Also solutions to rural healthcare must be tailored to each individual community. A simple nostrum but one which can be lost in a policy framework which tries to impose a "one-fits-all" philosophy. The first question is always - is it appropriate to this community? Bundeena exists in the confused "place" of where it is in regard to Sydney. It is perceived to be on the boundary of urban and rural. Fiscally it is classed as metropolitan Sydney and pays appropriate rates and taxes. Therefore it is urban and demands an urban solution

If those in power want to fix the area's problems they can do so easily
They can establish in Bundeena a :-

COMMUNITY CARE CENTRE
incorporating

AMBULANCE STATION DOCTORS SURGERY POLICE STATION

- It would service the entire 16000 hectare Park area.
- It would ensure the safety of our most welcome 4 million visitors to this beautiful, serene and peaceful oasis.
- A state of the art Centre would attract and retain high calibre care professionals
- The three care elements would co-ordinate efficiently, obviating the perception of communication and collaboration problems with other health professionals in rural areas
- Resources would be freed-up elsewhere
- A high visibility Community Care Centre be a fitting advert for our far-sighted, innovative State Government
- A pioneering solution would meet funding criteria as being outside the norm

Please establish a pioneering solution
Thank you, for your interest

Elaine Singleton