

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

**Name:** Suppressed

**Date received:** 24/06/2008

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Partially Confidential

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am an Ambulance Officer employed by the Ambulance Service of New South Wales (ASNSW). I would like to contribute the following submission to the inquiry into the management and operations of ASNSW.

I am currently appointed to \_\_\_\_\_ Ambulance Station and have over \_\_\_\_\_ years of service. The issues I would like to bring to the attention of the Legislative Council Inquiry relate to ASNSW management. I firmly believe that in recent times management culture has substantially deteriorated. The over-riding emphasis guiding management decisions appears to be on saving money and the operational needs of the Service while the needs of road staff are disregarded. There is an "us versus them" mentality in that road staff are treated as the enemy. Management remains aloof of operational staff and communication between management and staff is poor. Within the region to which I am appointed it appears that a "boys club" mentality is firmly entrenched. Officers from other regions are rarely successful in gaining management positions in this area irrespective of their skills, qualifications and experience.

My own recent personal experiences have left me in no doubt that the manner in which complaints and grievances are handled is, at best, inadequate. It would seem that long delays in resolving disputes are acceptable and even intentional with the purpose in delays being to wait for the complainant to give up on the issue.

Related to the above is another issue of personal relevance to me which concerns the response of ASNSW to flexible workplace practices. For twelve months I have been attempting to temporarily reduce my working hours due to my responsibilities as a carer. Initially I was told by management that I was being "selfish" in making this request and that I would be "waiting a long time" to have my request considered. After an unnecessarily stressful year of trying to reduce my hours temporarily I have recently reluctantly agreed to the only option made available to me by ASNSW – to reduce my hours permanently.

In my situation I believe ASNSW has acted contrary to the intentions of the *Flexible Work Practices Policy and Guidelines* (NSW Premier's Department) which state:

*Where a full time employee wishes to work part time and desires a right of return to full time work, this is to be recorded in the part time work agreement. Return to work is to be at the same level as their former full time role and where possible at the same location and with similar duties. Agencies need to recognise that a right of return to full time work must be available where full time employees wish to work part time for a limited period if these employees are to be able to take advantage of part time arrangements.*

As mentioned, I have been denied the opportunity to reduce my hours temporarily and have signed an agreement with ASNSW to work **permanent** part time hours. Although the *Flexible Work Practices Policy and Guidelines* (NSW Premier's Department) state that agreements can be "*varied by consent*" I was told that the agreement presented to myself (and the other officer, party to the agreement) was non-negotiable. I was told that if I did not sign the agreement immediately it would be withdrawn. I found this approach threatening and believe it was aimed at bullying both officers into accepting terms which were in reality not acceptable. It seems that ASNSW interprets policies in ways which wholly and solely suit the Service and when rational argument is exhausted a favourite management catch cry is that decisions are based on "operational needs". It must be remembered that staff also have needs but these are rarely and inconsistently considered by management.

Bullying and intimidation by managers seems to be both commonplace and acceptable to ASNSW. Personally, I have been verbally abused in a violent fashion over the telephone. This particular incident was witnessed by another officer who was able to hear the manager yelling at me over the telephone. When I made a complaint to management I was advised that the manager in question "is a bit like that". Furthermore, I was later informed that this manager had physically pushed an officer and had a history of striking patients. As this person has recently been promoted it would seem that his style of management is not only condoned but rewarded.

Finally, I would like to make a suggestion. At present Station Officers, who are the first line of management, perform road duties as well as management duties. I believe Station Officers should not be assigned to road duties as this results in them rarely being available to perform management functions efficiently and effectively. I am of the opinion that by making the first line of management more available to road staff there could be significant improvements in the relationships between operational and management personnel.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns.