

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

Name: Suppressed
Date received: 19/06/2008

Partially Confidential

19 June 2008,

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please accept this submission in relation to the Ambulance Service of NSW Legislative Inquiry. Firstly I would like to introduce myself as _____ who has been employed by the Ambulance Service since _____. In my service I have never seen staff morale so low and I believe this low morale is a result of many causes. Personally for me it is that I have no confidence in the Ambulance Service's senior management and its structure. It seems that the Ambulance Service are experts in reactive and crisis management. Daily I am speechless at some of the decisions that our executive make. Examples include, not predicting the drastic shortage of Intensive Care Paramedics that we now have which stops Officers from going on secondments. Introducing projects such as CARE and ECP to decrease people from going to hospital and not spending more money on trying to educate the public about when it's appropriate to call an Ambulance. Not researching the growing population, communities and increase the staffing levels to suit the workloads and also position stations at more appropriate locations. Not introducing a proper rank structure where there is always a Station Manager on each shift at every station. Selling off assets i.e. stations and then leasing them back. I still can't fathom why the service would sell a Station only to lease it back from the owner. It is now at the stage where the owners are telling the service that they want their asset after the lease expires and are evicting the service. Could you imagine selling your own home to then rent it back from the owner? This is either a grave financial decision or it is evident that the Service is in a financial crisis. At the moment we are in a pay dispute which I believe is well overdue. I have been told by some other senior Officers that the Ambulance Service has not given a pay rise to staff since 1989 in relation to productivity, skills and value.

I earn an hourly rate less than the clerks at my local hospital. Ambulance Officers are the most trusted profession, however why are we so underpaid? This gives Ambulance Officers the feeling of being undervalued which is a result of our poor morale. We are expected to increase our skills to improve patient outcomes, which I agree with; however we are not financially remunerated for these extra responsibilities. Have you ever heard of an employer

that gives their staff significantly more responsibility which in turn makes them more accountable and does not reward them with a financial benefit? It is very dissatisfying for me when I see jobs advertised internally within the Ambulance Service that have a significantly higher salary than I do. I truly believe that the grass root on road Ambulance Officer should be the most valuable resource. We are the ones who are knocking on the door of the person who called 000, diagnosing, treating and transporting the patient. The responsibility we have is enormous as we have the most precious thing in our care and that is a human's life. I am not saying that I should be on an exorbitant salary, but what I am saying is that for the responsibility that I am given I am underpaid. Enormous workloads are another bone of contention and have pushed officers to breaking point, exhaustion and in some cases suicide. At my particular station we have not increased the staffing levels to accommodate the growing community population. Since I have started at Station the NSW Fire Brigades have built two new fire stations within the same geographical area that I cover and the Ambulance Service has not even thought of increasing its staffing level at the station. To make things clearer, in the area that my station covers which at any one time has three ambulances, the NSW Fire Brigades have six stations with a total of eight manned trucks. This is a perfect example of the Service's inability to resource effectively. Most Officers' I know are fatigued and as I write this submission two of my colleagues are into their sixth hour of overtime for their shift. They started at 8:00 am this morning and are still working and the time is now 11:15 pm. They have also not had any lunch and are expected to start tomorrow at 8:00 am tomorrow and do it all over again. This is another example of the need to have more crewed ambulances on the road to accommodate our massive workloads. We are not able to retain senior staff and this is extremely worrying as there are becoming less and less experienced staff members. Obviously due to the above examples and also that there is very limited opportunity for promotion. I was absolutely astounded to find the lack of rank structure and supervision at an on road level. There are too many high ranked off road Officers within the Service and not enough Station managers to supervise staff. At we have one Station manager for approximately staff. This means that when he is off duty there is no managerial supervision. There should be a rank structure similar to the NSW Police

Force where there is a supervisor on every shift to handle any clinical or managerial issue. Can I add within the NSW Police there is approximately one Inspector and four Sergeants to supervise 20 staff **each shift**. At Station we have one Inspector and one Station manager to supervise staff on **all shifts**. This makes absolutely no sense. Another way to retain staff would be to financially remunerate them for years of service. At this point in time an Ambulance Officer in his/her tenth year earns the same hourly rate as an Officer in his/her 35th year. It's no wonder senior Officers are disgruntled! Another issue is that most stations that I have been attached to and have worked from are absolutely disgusting and dilapidated. An independent needs to access all stations and assess their safety as most are riddled with asbestos, infested with vermin and are rundown to the point of ill repair. This is another reason for low morale as coming in to work to a workplace that is neglected and derelict is one sure way to make people look to other careers. I want to finally add one more point and an example of the Ambulance Service having too many bureaucrats and being too top heavy.

The Police Force is six times the size of the Ambulance Service however it seems the Ambulance Service has six times the size of bureaucracy than the Police. This again makes absolutely no sense. If the Ambulance Service was to detach from NSW Health and become its own entity under the Emergency Services banner similar to the NSW Fire Brigades or NSW Police it would be a great thing. I believe the Ambulance Service having to "beg for budget" from NSW Health is a main reason for our demise and failures. This would mean not having a political puppet disguised as a CEO and having a Commissioner who has been through the ranks and knows what an on road Ambulance Officer really needs. I want to thank you for taking the time to read my submission and I hope that it has highlighted what I believe to be drastic deficiencies and deep rooted problems within the

- 4 -

Ambulance Service of NSW. Could I also please ask also that my submission remains in confidence for fear of reprisal?

Kind Regards,