

Submission
No 69

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

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Wednesday, 18 June 2008

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

I wish to make a submission to this inquiry in regards to management practices into bullying and intimidation of staff by staff and the inadequacy of management within the Ambulance Service of NSW to deal with these offenders.

I joined the ambulance Service in July 1988 in Sydney as a probationary Ambulance Officer. Following this period where I worked at Castle Hill and done many a shift at Blacktown I was posted to Balranald where I worked from August 1989 until January 1992, when I completed my level 4 training. From there I worked at Narrandera for twelve months before moving to Wagga Wagga.

Whilst in Wagga I performed a lot of relief work at smaller stations being away from my family for extended periods, I also worked as Acting Station Officer both on the station and in the Coordination centre where I learnt a great deal about management, rosters, people skills and Ambulance Operations under the guidance of then Superintendent Mr Graham Willis.

In June 1995 I moved to Dorrigo and again worked in the Coordination Centre at Coffs Harbour, prior to applying and being successful for the Station Officers position at Grafton where I moved to in June 1996.

During my time at Grafton I fulfilled the roll of Station Officer, relieved in Sector Office Lismore as Acting District Officer as well as doing relief at various stations to cover short falls in rosters. I was a member of our sector's OH&S Committee for a period of 2 terms with my main aim to secure duress alarms on our portable radios for times when officers were in danger which happens quite frequently. We were finally successful after a long drawn out process taking over 12 months, with little regard given to Officer safety in the Northern Rivers Sector, considering other Sectors in the State had already been using this vital piece of equipment for Officer safety.

During my time at Grafton, I along with other members of the Grafton staff and officers from other stations within the sector were subjected to the practice of bullying by certain staff members. One of these staff members had a history of bullying at previous stations he had worked, not only in our sector but wherever he worked in the state.

At first I accepted his apology's and hand shakes but time and time again the verbal abuse and tirades both on station or driving to cases they continued. The time came where I could no longer tolerate these outbursts and they started to affect my personal well being and home life. I was consumed with not wanting to go to work, with constant stiff necks and upper back and shoulder aching and at times feeling physically ill.

I could no longer tolerate this behaviour to me or to other staff members, so I lodged a grievance complaint with our sector management. During a meeting with all parties and a witness of his choice he again referred to me as a

I requested a written apology but nothing was ever forthcoming.

This particular person had other staff on side so when he used his bully boy tactics they would not put their names to complaints because they did not want to be involved. Even our so called Professional Standards & Conduct Unit would not get involved, only to tell officers including myself that there was nothing they could do:

I forwarded details of the situation that was happening at Grafton and within the Northern Rivers sector to CEO Mr Greg Rochford via email; I was advised there was a chain of command to be followed. This had been done on numerous occasions without any result, I was even told by our Area manager Mr Alan Loudfoot that this should be water off a ducks back grow up be a man. I also kept notes in my Station Officer diary as well as forwarding to Sector Office file notes outlining this unwarranted and obscene behaviour, but yet again no action was taken.

For an organisation that has so many Policies and Procedures most of which are bound by legislation, covering everything you could possibly think of, they still fail the victims of workplace bullying and harassment. I guess I was a lucky one; I got out of the service and have been prescribed medication for the depression that this continual abuse from so called colleuges has caused.

Others were not so fortunate and took their own lives because the service as in my case and other officers in Grafton and other stations around the state, would not fix this continuing blight on the workplace, which is covered under various legislations.

I have received counselling both when I worked in the Service and since leaving to try and deal with this horrid period of my life both during my career which also had major ramifications on my family life also. It is obvious to me more so now that the Ambulance Service of NSW are treating these cases of workplace bullying and harassment as a joke even though innocent people have taken their lives i.e. the officer at Cowra, or people have been forced to resign as we can no longer put up with the continual denigration of ourselves and that of our families.

Being an Ambo is at times hard enough on people in their profession and on raising a family without the abuse dished out by our own colleagues and lack of support and in action taken by our managers at all levels. Being thought of as a sook and not a man because you are unable to cope with workplace bullies is an absolute blight on the Ambulance Service of NSW.

Every time you walk into a hospital you read signs saying verbal or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated and action will be taken, so why aren't the same guidelines and measures taken within the Ambulance Service regardless of who it is. How many more lives or resignations have to occur before something is done about these bullies.

I resigned from the Service in _____ as I could no longer bear the workplace bullying. I am on medication for at least another six months to try and overcome and

repair the psychological damage that has been caused from this workplace malpractice and get my life and my wife's life back on track.

As I said I consider myself and my family lucky as I did not take my own life like others have done, because of the actions of a few and the in actions of many.

Yours Sincerely