

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

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The NSW Police cannot acknowledge something it is not aware of! This fundamental inability to effectively self-assess is the heart of the problem. When I first dreamt of the NSW Police I envisaged something along the knights of the round table. Each officer striving to be the best they could be. In reality it turned out to be closer to the Lord of the Flies!

I don't know who said it, but sometimes the only place you can get honesty is from your enemies. Corruption in the NSW Police is no real threat to the general public. However, laziness, ineptitude, and unethical conduct debilitate the effectiveness of the NSW Police every single day. Not counting the loss of productivity, the NSW police operates at about 55%-60% of its capacity at the best of times.

Do not under-estimate the size of the problem or the seismic shift in culture and attitude that will confront the NSW Police if it truly seeks to change the culture and remove bullying. The day to day changes that will be necessary and fundamental that it will make the implementation of the Wood Royal commission look like a kids sports carnival. The need for senior police to look within themselves and recognise their own failings in what has been a successful career with in the current system, would I submit be too much for most!

The problem of bullying within the NSW Police is so entrenched and systemic that the only be organisation that will do, or say, anything about its existence is the insurer for the NSW Police work cover Employers Mutual Limited. EML is going to such extraordinary lengths not to acknowledge bullying that by virtue of their actions it must exist.

The process of claiming psychological injury in the NSW Police is a nightmare and has already been examined by parliamentary committee. One of the areas that wasn't talked about or examined was the actions and conduct of the NSW Police and its insurer Employer Mutual Limited (EML) in relation to bullying.

As I understand and recall the threshold for injury claim is 14% whole person impairment. When an officer falls due to psychological injury and proceeds to claim they need to reasonable identify injury and the cause. Now if an officer submits a claim that has 2 causations, the first being exposure to violence and horror, and the second being bullying, the insurer, EML, will seek to have the two injuries treated as separate, thus removing the ability to get the injury over the threshold for compensation.

Clash of Cultures

There is currently only one form of communication style in the NSW Police. The systemic problem of bullying can be traced back to the academy. Police are always and only trained in coercive force. The whole concept of the police is force. When this type of communication style becomes the norm communication style it is easy to see how it is transferred over to internal communication.

The changes in the world perspective and demands of the community have changed at a rate that has dramatically outpaced the NSW Police ability to adapt its internal communication style. The new recruiting models and targeted recruit types are not those of the '70s and '80s, when a height and chest measurement were the basic criteria plus a minimum school certificate education were the requirements.

This is not say that the recruit of that era, now the senior management of the NSW Police were dumb, far from it. But those that are now in the middle to senior management have come through an internal police communication area where the bulls' rule!

The modern-day recruit has met criteria that does not match the resilience required to move through the system. Those that do adapt do so by adopting the communication style that succeeds. The bullied become the bullies.

Plausible Deniability (Failure to Supervise)

In my situation, my torturer has been identified in as many as 30 claims by officers who have departed the NSW Police, though it has not impacted on their career progression. Part of their management style was that once they locked onto a target was to tell them that they, the target officer, was to imagine each day at work that there was a red dot over their heart. The red dot being the target point of a laser sight for a firearm. And that they, the torturer, would and could at any time pull the trigger, metaphorically ending the officer's career/life.

This meant that the target officer had to work and live in a state of constant terror. Never a conducive or pleasant way to work, let alone in an emergency service. Funnily enough those fears of constant strain and attack are exactly the same as those fears that present in officers who develop PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

In my case I was more than happy to contact outside region based resources to assist me. I contacted the work place equity officer north region, and the work place equity co-ordinator at headquarters. It became apparent that these positions, had been created as resume polishers where personal were placed to fill strategic gaps in their resumes, rather than actually take on and assist officers in power imbalance bullying scenarios.

Everyone in the NSW Police has a supervisor. The higher a member rises in the organisation the more entrenched their behaviours and management styles become. This is based on the self-belief that they would not have risen in rank if they weren't doing

something right. They must have had the support of at least immediately senior and most probably at least two levels higher.

By the time an officer reaches a commissioned officer level, a rising officer has had some many people in supervisor roles. If they had been identified as being a bully, and that the behaviour was not corrected, then they, the supervisors, would all stand to have their own competency questioned.

In my situation, I will never be able to face off against my torturer. By the time a bully reaches a senior NCO/commissioned level they are adept a manipulation of the complaint management system. They have a strategic network of underlings, similar to the sucker fish that attaches themselves under the belly of a larger fish.

These underlings will be often nominated as a witness to be present during a dressing down of the victim, as the torturer needs to be sure that his management of the officer will be suitable reported should it get out of hand. Or as a training supervisor to collect dirt on the officer being targeted.

The torturer will have made many reports and informal comments to their supervisor regarding the target officer prior to the formal and procedural bullying. If the subject officer goes over his torturer's head, say to the LAC Commander, what is the likelihood of the LAC Commander agreeing with subject officer, that a senior NCO/commissioned officer under his direct supervision was acting inappropriately. ZERO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The ramification for the officer above the bully is extremely serious and possibly career ending. Much easier to side with the bully, isolate and ignore the victim officer, and let nature takes its course. If the victim officer leaves or transfers, problem solved! Bully officer vindicated, problem officer gone, bully's supervisor no problems, no issues, happy days!

The Wheat and the Chaff

There has, however to be some acknowledgement that management with an organisation of some 17,000 staff sometimes calls for difficult management decisions. There will be staff that feel that the discipline and corrective training they are receiving is part of a bullying process. This inability to self-assess by subject officers needs to be supported. Otherwise the effort to correct the officer and the money already spent on their training cannot be realised. Both the bullying and the officer's inability to see their own short comings must be professionally managed as both are equal obstacles to effectiveness of the NSW Police.

Merit Based Promotion (Rise of the Narcissist)

“Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a personality disorder in which there is a long-term pattern of abnormal behaviour characterized by exaggerated feelings of self-importance, an excessive need for admiration, and a lack of understanding of others' feelings.”

To put this in context, abnormal behaviour, in the above DSM 4 definition is gauged against the general population. In an organisation which has geared itself to the narcissist being the normal, abnormal is hard to spot.

To be promoted on merit requires an ability to promote and put one's own achievements out on display. Not just on display though, to succeed in the merit based promotion system a successful player must continually place themselves in the best light in front of the key influences and opinion makers. Of course, a little bit of showmanship, or gilding the lily, is never going to hurt.

The complete absence of compassion is probably the most disturbing feature of the bully. The bully does not see themselves as a bad person, or doing a bad thing. They either justify and rationalise their conduct as being tough and fair. Or more frightening and more common in the higher-ranking torturer is the complete inability to see or beware of the harm and hurt they are causing. It does not exist, so they cannot be aware of what they can't perceive.

In my situation, my torturer transferred to another command. They had been successful as a narcissist because they had served under a commander with the same style. A new officer with a different style arrived and initially I bloomed. I was given supervision shifts in charge of the command on night shift with no problems, the destructive gossip stopped, as no one was listening and for a time my career appeared back on track.

Intervention (The Hunter and their Prey)

Bullying in the NSW Police is the ultimate self-perpetuating cycle. Most police officers have a certain amount of internal grit or guts, they have to just make it to the front line of policing. A typical reaction is for a targeted officer to start acting out. They will display behaviours that will bring them into direct confrontation with their torturer, in a twisted logic of trying to take everything the bully can give out. Not realising that this exact behaviour validates the bully's targeting of the officer.

Having now exhibited behaviours worth of censure, even if the subject officer seeks outside help assistance, the actions of the bully are now formally required and justified. The victim officer has no chance. Even if the Victim officer makes contact at an early stage no one with a career path in mind wants to go around making enemies. No One!!!!!!!!!!

So, for a victim officer to successfully take on a higher level bully, who will have the support of their supervisor (because they do not want to found wanting as a supervisor) the victim officer has nearly no chance.

In my case the training staff at the main station openly stated that me return to my eventual demise station was not recommended on the basis that the station was toxic and in their words, I would be "ripped apart!"

I reported and sort help from every level of the NSW Police and was told everything from “let it go” to being further bullied for complaining about being bullied. No one wants to get between the predator and their prey.

Vendetta’s and grudges in the NSW Police are legendary and some have recently been played out in front of NSW Parliamentary committees.

Actions

1. Professional and independent research needs to be conducted of both current and more importantly former officers on issues relating to bullying, support, rank and other variables.
2. An independent section of public servants with no career agenda related to progression through the NSW Police as point of contact and case managers with specific training and understanding of bullying attached to the wellbeing and psychology unit of the NSW Police.
3. That an effective and well resourced Employee Assistance Program be put in place.
4. That all officers placed on conduct management plans, or managerial monitoring, have mandatory debriefing by staff attached to the welfare unit outside the chain of command.
5. That mandatory training be put in place to recognise and deal with bullying starting at the academy.

I would be happy to appear before an enquiry to give this and other evidence in person and on the record.