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Extra 700 Paramedics Update: NSWA Determined to Remain Behind the Pack

ADHSU representatives have been engaged in a near constant series of meetings with NSW about the deployment of the 700 extra paramedics promised by the NSW government a short while ago.

So far we've only been informed of planned deployments for the first two years (see previous newsletters). We continue to fight for the full four-year deployment (draft) plan, but so far government has frustrated our attempts.

What we do know is that NSW has given up on response time performance, even though it has slipped to the slowest in the country. NSW was the second slowest behind Tasmania, however that jurisdiction has picked up its game over the last few years while NSW has dropped back.

Why is ADHSU talking about response times? Why does a union of professional paramedics care about output KPIs that in most industries only management are concerned with? Because, as we know, there are tragic stories on the other end of delayed responses, and these tragedies not only affect families and whole towns, but of course the paramedics who are members of those communities and who also feel the loss (and field questions from locals who feel betrayed).

NSWA currently has tunnel vision when it comes to where and why it wants to deploy some of the extra 700 paramedics. For example, Woolgoolga, Nambucca Heads, and Macksville are all earmarked to be provided with extra paramedics to bring in a nightshift to replace on-call. On the face of it, that's a good thing for the community, until you learn that the daylight work demand often leaves those towns uncovered while the duty crew is on a job (or worse, on area cover in another town).

Given that this is most likely the last chance for these and other towns to get Ambulance resources right, ADHSU delegates have taken NSW to the IRC in an attempt to force them to model different options. We'd like to see what it would look like in those towns if the extra paramedics were used to create an additional day or afternoon shift rather than a night shift.

The theory is that the community and paramedics might receive a better result overall by having two duty cars during high demand periods (being day and afternoon), while also reducing the fatiguing effects of on-call duty. Obviously, it's also important to model how often surrounding stations are required to cover jobs in the relevant town based on what roster model they are running.

NSWA agreed to provide us with the requested modelling during yesterday's IRC conference which will allow us to test our theory. We'll provide members with an update once we've seen the modelling.

Gerard Hayes
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD