



Newsletter: 642/2019  
Date: 5 September 2019  
Distribution: All ambulance members  
Contact: Stuart Hatter



## Plant room door failures a symptom of a growing safety problem

ADHSU is still in the process of investigating the multiple failures of near new plant room bi-fold doors. However, we thought we'd update members on our early thoughts and findings.

We are particularly interested in how it came to be that the employer purchased potentially unsuitable doors for the Superstations even though the same doors had failed in other newly built stations in the recent past.

Our investigation is broad in scope. We can't say the same for the Service's investigation. They are only investigating the Bankstown failure in isolation. Whenever an employer limits the scope of an investigation to the failure only, it's usually an indication they are protecting themselves from blame for failing to act before the incident. **What we know so far:**

- The doors themselves haven't come crashing down; however, the counterweight cables keep snapping, and the counterweight is subject to a dangerous uncontrolled fall from height.
- The employer knew about this problem but failed to act effectively or at all and continued to allow Health to purchase doors that are potentially dangerously not fit for purpose.
- There is near zero evidence of the employer discharging its duty to consult workers about the associated hazards and risk – at least one senior manager involved in this issue believes there's no use consulting paramedics because they aren't engineers (this shows that he has a fundamentally flawed understanding of his [consultation requirements under the WHS Act](#)).
- In dealing with the issue of multiple door failures, the employer is alarmingly full of self-praise suggesting that ADHSU should be very pleased with the way they've handled it. They were unaware that sending out a safety alert that controlled the risk of a door falling down and killing you by more or less saying '[try not to stand under them](#)' is probably a prosecutable breach of [NSWA's safety duties](#). This alert was issued a few days before the Bankstown incident (Penrith's door cable had snapped).
- Once NSW had secured all Superstations into the open position, it created a new risk for site security. Ambulance then hired security guards to be on station 24/7. But this too has been poorly handled: on at least one occasion the night time security guard vanished and left the Superstation unattended; on another a guard was (allegedly) caught spying on female paramedics changing in the change rooms.
- We have an unconfirmed report that the Penrith Station door failed (snapped cable) last week, just two days after NSW gave it the all clear to operate again.
- Most concerningly NSW has been less than honest and transparent with ADHSU throughout this process. Injury rates are seldom reduced while an employer is more interested in covering up failures than fixing them.

It is very disappointing that NSW, who injures more paramedics per 1000 than any other ambulance service in Australia, seems to be getting more secretive and combative on safety than it was a few years ago. On that basis we've determined that ADHSU will also become much more direct to ensure the safety of members.

In unity,

Gerard Hayes  
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD