

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

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That the NSW Government establish an independent, external complaints management oversight body for workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination in the NSW Police Force, NSW Rural Fire Service, Ambulance Service of New South Wales, NSW State Emergency Service and Fire & Rescue NSW, which:

- is available to workers who have exhausted their agency's internal complaints management processes, or whose complaint has not been determined within a reasonable timeframe
- facilitates the timely resolution of complaints
- promotes procedural fairness and natural justice
- provides advice and support to all involved parties
- works with the agencies to improve policies and procedures relating to complaints management.

### Recommendation 2

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That each of the five emergency services agencies report to the Legislative Council annually on data in respect of bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints within their agency, including timeframes for resolving complaints, and publish this information on their websites.

### Recommendation 3

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That Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Legal Affairs undertake a brief inquiry reviewing any data provided by the emergency services agencies on bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints, and the steps taken by the NSW Government and the emergency services agencies to implement the recommendations of this committee.

### Recommendation 4

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That the Public Service Commission reconvene its roundtable on bullying to refocus the leaders of public sector agencies on ways to prevent and manage the risks associated with workplace bullying.

### Recommendation 5

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That the NSW Government identify a lead agency to drive the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for First Responder Organisations*, to monitor its implementation and to evaluate its effectiveness across the five emergency services agencies.

### Recommendation 6

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That the NSW Government establish a cross-agency working group comprising senior representatives from the five emergency services agencies to:

- review the effectiveness of the current training within the agencies regarding bullying, harassment and discrimination
- develop additional training specifically targeted at bullying, harassment and discrimination, incorporating best-practice methods and lessons from this inquiry.

- Recommendation 7** **38**  
 That each of the five emergency services agencies make employee mental health a priority action in terms of prevention, early intervention and response, and in doing so:
- address the psychosocial risks that can contribute to a bullying environment
  - ensure that managers are sufficiently trained, skilled, supported and time-resourced to support workers' mental health needs
  - invest more in proactive provision of support to workers.
- Recommendation 8** **38**  
 That the NSW Government commission research on the prevention of and appropriate responses to mental health issues among first responders, to assist the emergency services agencies in developing effective mental health interventions.
- Recommendation 9** **39**  
 That each of the five emergency services agencies take steps with their contractors for trauma and other mental health supports to ensure that:
- the Employee Assistance Program is fully available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
  - the Employee Assistance Program and other specialist services are fully accessible to staff in rural and regional areas
  - calls for trauma assistance always receive a timely response
  - additional sessions are provided to staff if required.
- Recommendation 10** **39**  
 That the NSW Government establish a specialist 24/7 telephone trauma counselling service for emergency service workers experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma, using the model proposed by Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia.
- Recommendation 11** **63**  
 That the NSW Rural Fire Service implement an independent and impartial process, utilising an external person or organisation, for the election of senior brigade officers.
- Recommendation 12** **63**  
 That the NSW Rural Fire Service:
- provide training to all volunteers and staff on the Service Standards pertaining to bullying, harassment and discrimination
  - develop quick reference guides and factsheets on these Service Standards that contain links to further information, to be distributed to all volunteers and staff.
- Recommendation 13** **64**  
 That the NSW Rural Fire Service review the processes and criteria in place for considering requests for legal assistance by volunteers and staff, to ensure that this support is provided in all appropriate cases.
- Recommendation 14** **65**  
 That the NSW Government and the NSW Rural Fire Service review the undoubted benefits of relocating the NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters to a regional city, while ensuring that any such relocation prioritises the effectiveness and safe operation of the headquarters.

**Recommendation 15** **98**

That the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, in reviewing its Professional Standards Unit:

- ensure that the review addresses the role, processes, effectiveness and oversight of the unit itself and of the Allegations Review Group
- examine how to introduce greater independence into complaints handling processes
- include a plan for how the effectiveness of the new unit and its systems, processes, governance and technology are to be monitored
- include specific measures to ensure that victims are supported throughout the complaint process
- report to the Legislative Council on the outcomes of the review on completion.

**Recommendation 16** **99**

That the Ambulance Service of New South Wales review, as a matter of urgency, how Straight Talk is being utilised by line managers, and implement strategies to ensure that it is never used in situations perceived by staff as involving bullying or harassment. This review must:

- examine the experiences of paramedic and call taker staff
- address the need for independent, appropriately trained facilitators.

**Recommendation 17** **101**

That NSW Health and the Ambulance Service of New South Wales examine practical and structural ways in which to further integrate the Ambulance Service into the health system, in order to facilitate the necessary shift towards a health service culture.

**Recommendation 18** **121**

That the NSW Police Force, in consultation with the Police Association of NSW, review its policies and procedures, to ensure that bullying complaints are not inappropriately categorised as workplace conflicts.

**Recommendation 19** **122**

That the NSW Police Force update its policies and procedures so that, unless requested by the officer making an allegation of workplace bullying, outcomes other than moving the officer are prioritised.

**Recommendation 20** **122**

That the NSW Police Force ensure employees are made aware of the way in which information about them is managed and shared in the workers compensation process.

**Recommendation 21** **123**

That the NSW Government provide additional funding to the NSW Police Force to employ more family support coordinators.

**Recommendation 22** **139**

That the NSW State Emergency Service mandate communications milestones within the complaints management process and clear timeframes for acknowledging and responding to complaint related correspondence.

- Recommendation 23** 166
- That Fire & Rescue NSW:
- review the disciplinary measures in place for bullying, harassment and discrimination
  - take appropriate and consistent disciplinary action in response to inappropriate behaviour.
- Recommendation 24** 166
- That the NSW Government and Fire & Rescue NSW immediately publicly release the Boland report.
- Recommendation 25** 167
- That the NSW Government provide additional funding to Fire & Rescue NSW to support the mental health and wellbeing of its employees.
- Recommendation 26** 168
- That Fire & Rescue NSW implement an internal education campaign regarding the '50/50' recruitment strategy and respectful attitudes towards women.
- Recommendation 27** 168
- That Fire & Rescue NSW implement a widespread information recruitment strategy which includes women in publicity campaigns, school visits and community events, and that Fire & Rescue NSW maintain attention to the mixed composition of teams.