



Ambo News

August 2013

United Voice is the Professional Ambulance Officers Union in Queensland.

Ambulance delegates from across the state ensure members have a real voice in the running of the union and our combined strength means that our voices are heard.

Membership of United Voice entitles you to numerous benefits including:

- Industrial strength and protection
- Expert advice, assistance and advocacy about work issues
- Trained delegates who can assist you in the workplace
- Support from friends and colleagues, and the opportunity to be an active participant in the workplace
- State-wide delegate structure giving members a real voice
- Union training courses for delegates and active members
- Regular newsletters and online updates on ambulance issues
- Access to Union Shopper, Members' Equity, Union Law and free funeral coverage

If you are not already a member talk to your local delegate about joining your colleagues in fighting for a fair, high quality and safe workplace.

United Voice Queensland

27 Peel Street
South Brisbane Q 4101

Ambo Hotline:

(07) 3291 4550

Online:

ambulance.myunitedvoice.org

Keelty Report: What to Expect

The long awaited Keelty Report on Emergency Services is due to be delivered soon. United Voice's request to take part in this review was denied but we did put forward a submission expressing our concerns. It's understood that this report compiled by former Police Commissioner Mick Keelty will contain a number of recommendations for change in Queensland Ambulance Service. Although we will not see this report until it's made public, it's understood that two major recommendations will be the outsourcing of patient transport and communications services and merging ambulance with Queensland Health. Both of these issues were addressed in our submission and we strongly disagree with these recommendations.

Ambulance officers are consistently rated as one of the most trusted professions by the public yet the LNP Government is determined to destroy QAS. Merging our ambulance service with an already dysfunctional and ailing Queensland Health will be a disaster. Quite simply ambulance will become a small fish in a very big pond and officers will no longer have a say in how they perform their job. Resources and funding will inevitably be cut as ambulance would also come under the Queensland Health budget. This move would be catastrophic for members and for our ambulance service.

The second recommendation we are expecting from the Keelty Report is that the patient transport service and our communications centres will be outsourced. Both areas are important cogs in the QAS wheel and without them our ambulance service would not run as smoothly. Private, for profit companies will take over these essential services and the contracts will be given to the highest bidder. Our comms centre will no longer be staffed by trained emergency medical dispatchers but instead run by admin staff. How will they be able to tell panicked callers what to do in an emergency situation? How will untrained patient transport officers be able to provide the best possible care to patients? Privatising any part of QAS will put the community in danger.

We are waiting for the Keelty Report to be handed down and we will hold an emergency meeting with your State Councillors to formulate a plan of attack. We will not stand by and allow Campbell Newman to downgrade our emergency services.

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Arbitration: The Fight Goes On

The arbitration hearing regarding the Queensland Ambulance Service Determination began on Tuesday 2nd of July. The first week consisted mainly of evidence from QAS, except for one United Voice witness, Professor John Quiggin, one of Australia's leading economists.

Professor John Quiggin's expert economic evidence was very critical of the economic assumptions of the Newman Government's Commission of Audit report. He also disagreed with the Newman Government's position that the best way to address the state's financial position is to reduce debt by cutting employment costs.

Queensland Ambulance Service' evidence focused on the inability of QAS to afford the union's claims. QAS maintained that a reduction in roster notification would not affect employees' family lives, that meal overtime payments are an illegitimate penalty payment to employees and that employees dishonestly claim this entitlement.

A number of concessions were drawn from QAS witnesses in relation to the effect of the QAS proposed roster reduction claim and the

QAS proposed abolition of meal windows and meal overtime payments claim. QAS evidence in respect of the meal penalty included concessions that there was no evidence of employees dishonestly claiming the meal entitlement and that QAS management had a range of management tools by which it could manage the taking of meals within the meal window.

The Full Bench requested an inspection of a communications centre with a date to be arranged shortly.

It remains a concern that QAS is hiding behind Government policy to justify its claims for reductions in employment costs. The QAS put in their opening submission that any wages award to paramedics above what the Newman Government was offering would result in reductions in QAS services.

The next dates in the arbitration will be Wednesday 21 August to Thursday 23 August, with another date for witness evidence on Friday 30 August 2013.

Ambo Resources

Queensland Ambulance Service Determination 2010

You can find the details of the 2010 QAS Determination online at ambulance.myunitedvoice.org/2010_determination. The determination outlines the current wages and workplace conditions for QAS officers.

Standing with Us

Our community campaign - together with the United Firefighters Union, we have asked Queenslanders to stand with our emergency services workers. At standingwithus.com you can join the campaign, see the archive of television ads, and read the stories of Ambulance officers and firefighters.

Union Law

Hall Payne Lawyers has a proud tradition of assisting Australians from all walks of life. For more than 25 years, HPL has been there to assist people following work accidents and other injuries; couples and families going through change; even whole organisations fighting to protect member rights. With offices in Brisbane, Darwin, regional and Far North Queensland, HPL has forged a strong local focus, however we also act for a broad range of clients both interstate and internationally.

For general legal services Hall Payne offers a free initial consultation for United Voice members - just call the Ambo Hotline on (07) 3291 4550 for a referral

ambulance.myu

Launch of the Ambo Hotline

We know how important it is for ambulance officers to have instant access to their union.

An 'ambo hotline' has been set up to make sure all members have faster access to information and advice when they need it.

It'll be manned by a specialised United Voice team and is a unique number for ambulance officers to call when they need on the spot information.



Need Help?
Call (07) 3291 4550



PTS Outsourcing already underway

Campbell Newman is planning to privatise our patient transport service. This means the service will no longer be under the remit of Queensland Ambulance Service but instead will be run by for profit private companies.

The Keelty Report on Emergency Services, due to be delivered shortly, is expected to recommend the outsourcing of the patient transport service. The process has already started at the Princess Alexander Hospital, where a private Victorian based company is transporting patients. Health Service Chief Executive, Dr Richard Ashby confirmed that the private operator has been employed on an initial three month contract. We know this is a sign of things to come and the LNP Government is going to sell off all Queensland's patient transport services to the highest bidder.

We are ready for this attack and will fight to protect the PTS.

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Member Spotlight

Nick Lentakis ASM

Brisbane based paramedic Nick Lentakis was this year awarded the prestigious Ambulance Service Medal. Nick, who has worked in Queensland Ambulance Service for 24 years described the award as 'humbling' but admitted it also came as quite a surprise. He said it was extra special because his father was on the honours list during the Queens Jubilee year. Among other things Nick was awarded the medal for his contribution to workplace reform in Queensland Ambulance Service. In the mid 90's Nick was part of a team that toured the state explaining the benefits of enterprise bargaining. He said "We spent between 8 and 10 weeks on the road visiting stations right across Queensland, convincing ambos that enterprise bargaining was a good thing, in some cases it took a lot of convincing." Throughout his career he was heavily involved in industrial activities and believes people describe him as a very fair person because of this background. Nick says "I have a theory that people do not go out on purpose to do the wrong thing, if they make a mistake and it is unintentional then they should be supported."

Nick spent 7 years as an emergency flight paramedic which he maintains provided some of the many highlights of his career. Like all paramedics he has seen his fair share of tough cases and admits any incident where a child is involved is particularly hard to deal with. Nick says "When you have kids of your own you will always relate to what parents are going through, it's just heartbreaking."

Nick admits he has seen many changes down through the years but is concerned over the increased workloads paramedics now have. He said "We are already pushed to the limit and if our conditions are taken away it will have a very serious impact on our ability to do our job." However Nick says there is still great comradery among ambulance officers, "It always amazes me that when a heatwave, floods or some disaster hits, ambos just keep going, they come in off leave, come out of the woodwork to get the job done and help the community, that's what a true emergency service is all about and I am proud to be part of that."

Mindy Thomas

This month Mindy Thomas celebrated five years working in Queensland Ambulance Brisbane Operations Centre. Over the past five years, Mindy says she's had her ups and downs in the job but for her the most important part of working in Comms is taking pride in her work.

Mindy says "We are the first contact a patient has with Queensland Ambulance Service so it's vital we do our job properly or the person does not get the service they need." Mindy admits it's a tough, high pressurised job but the highs always outweigh the lows.

One of her fondest memories is a routine case where a caller's wife was suffering from chest pains and she successfully managed to calm him down and ensure he did all he could until the ambulance arrived. Mindy said the caller in question later rang back to say that if it happened again he'd know what to do because of the advice Mindy gave him. She concedes "it was a straight forward case but it's heartening to know that this man would be a lot more confident caring for his wife if the

Kerrie Henderson (PTS)

Kerrie Henderson was very moved when she was contacted by the wife of a long term patient recently. She was shocked and upset when she heard about the possible privatisation of patient transport services. She told Kerrie that the professional treatment and friendship that her palliative husband received was one of the reasons he continued to battle his dreadful disease and found the will to keep on fighting.

It's stories like these, from the patients Kerrie transports on a regular basis from their homes to the hospital that she says really makes her job worthwhile. Kerrie believes "It's patients like this particular one and the hundreds of others that motivate me to get into my vehicle every morning at 7am and begin my day."

She describes patient transport officers as Queensland Ambulance Service' quiet achievers. Kerrie says there are so many services they provide to patients and health practioners alike. They transport the elderly, the palliative and terminally ill to all their appointments, rehabilitation and treatments. She maintains "On many occasions, these patients and indeed their relatives are quite fearful of what lies ahead. We allay these fears and assure them that their loved ones are getting the utmost care in their moment of need. As we are trained to a very high standard we can speak broadly on the possible side effects of their treatment and offer advice on the most suitable community services for their needs."

Kerrie also feels because she spends so much time with patients, they are more likely to confide in her and open up about their fears or problems. She says "In some cases I've been concerned about some of the things patients have told me and notified one of my colleagues so the patient can get further help once they are in hospital."

Kerrie believes firmly that people trust patient transport officers because they know patient care is their number one priority. Despite the fact that privatising PTS would mean she'd lose her job, she admits "My biggest fear is that patient care would be jeopardised and the community would suffer."

situation occurred in the future, because of my advice."

With the constant attacks on the ambulance service by Campbell Newman, Mindy admits that morale is low. She says the biggest concern among her colleagues is not knowing what lies ahead. She says "There are so many rumours at the moment about ambulance merging with Queensland Health and the outsourcing of patient transport services and comms, no one knows what's going on."

With regards to potentially privatising the communications department, Mindy thinks it would be a disaster. She says "I am an EMD, if comms is privatised it will become an administration centre and patients will not get the expert care and advice they deserve." She says there are a lot of changes happening in the service, not all of them positive but as far as she is concerned her number one priority every shift is ensuring patients get the services they need from the communication centre.