

**Submission
No 5**

OPTIONS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKER HOUSING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Are you aware that paramedics in rural and remote NSW communities, unlike police, teachers and nurses, are not supplied housing?

NSW Ambulance does not supply any housing for their paramedics!

Our paramedics are generally posted to these remote stations, with no real say in where they get sent, after doing their training year in a major city. They are expected to find their own rental accommodation with no help from the ambulance service, and yet they are expected to turn up for their first shift regardless of whether they have a home to live in or not. The only thing NSW Ambulance offers with regards to housing is a 75% subsidy to a maximum of \$100. This does not help when the availability of rental properties in these towns is minimal at best, but generally is non-existent. If there are rentals available they are generally in very poor condition, offer little security or comfort, and are at a high cost. We are unable to attract staff or retain staff in these remote towns when they do not have access to accommodation.

I am the Station Officer at Brewarrina Ambulance station and have seen many new paramedics posted to Brewarrina in my 14 years here and I can tell you that their number one stressor when they are posted to these remote stations is where are they going to live. And this is definitely not isolated to Brewarrina, it affects many of the NSW Ambulance remote stations equally, such as Collarenebri, Bourke, Lightning Ridge and Walgett to name just a small few. Can you even imagine what it is like for them to have this problem, with no support from NSW Ambulance other than the offer of a menial rental subsidy, especially when other government employees such as police, nurses and teachers are supplied with affordable, safe and acceptable rental properties. It is no wonder that our stations have such a high turnover of staff when they are forced to share a house all together (very unhealthy for them to be potentially spending 24 hours a day together for 8 days at a time as we work 24/7 for 7-8 days straight) or have to live in temporary accommodation such as pubs, motels, and even having to live out of converted vans or caravans. Can you imagine how this affects their mental health!

There are blocks of land in a lot of these remote towns that are owned by NSW Ambulance that have condemned houses on them. These could be demolished and have units or transportable homes erected on them in a similar manner to the teacher housing compounds. This would not only offer safe and affordable accommodation to staff and encourage them to bring their families to live and work in these communities, it would also improve ambulance response times when they are on call overnight.

Please have discussions with the staff on the ground in these remote towns to find out what the reality of the situation is as opposed to what NSW Ambulance say they supply. There is a transfer policy they will quote but it is of no use to paramedics when there are no houses to even rent.

The current housing situation is unacceptable for paramedics who are required to leave their homes and families to service and care for these remote communities. Can you please help to rectify this, give them equality with their police and teacher counterparts, and put paramedics in homes.