



Council of Ambulance Authorities Occupational Violence in the Workplace - Position Statement

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Every day more than 14,000 paramedics in Australia and New Zealand are on call to save people's lives. Every day they risk an unprovoked attack. Every year hundreds of those who strive to rescue, revive, or transport injured and sick people, our call takers and dispatchers, are the victims of some form of violence. With each injury, or blow to their mental health, there is one less service member available to do his or her job.

Zero Tolerance

The Council of Ambulance Authorities (CAA) has adopted a zero tolerance position on physical and verbal attacks on all health care workers, including paramedics.

Illness, illicit drug abuse, drunkenness, and extreme emotional trauma cannot, and must not excuse unprovoked attacks on people doing their job.

CAA member services' initiatives highlight the threats, trauma, violence and the ultimate impact on paramedic services. Each story, each example another reason to support zero tolerance.

Penalties

Penalties for those convicted of assaulting paramedics should be seen to reflect paramedics' and the community's zero tolerance for this abhorrent behaviour.

The critical work undertaken by paramedics, their social service and sense of social justice must not be undermined by inadequate penalties for those who seek to thwart their efforts or worse, inflict pain and suffering.

The CAA supports proportional penalties that reflect the serious nature of these offences, and also serve as a deterrent.

Our members will be vigilant in pursuing appropriate penalties through the criminal justice system.

Community education

CAA member service campaigns provide compelling tools for public education on the incidence and impact of assaults.

Extensive dissemination of this information in conjunction with a broad program to educate the community will help to instil a culture of zero tolerance, and support for paramedics to do their job without the threat of violence or injury.

Safe workplace

Education and training for paramedics to enable them to properly assess potentially violent situations and de-escalate any threat will assist in the creation of a safer workplace.

Empowering paramedics to stay safe with the skills to assess risks and identify flashpoints to diffuse and manage potentially violent situations, redirect inappropriate behaviour and calm volatile individuals or groups, will foster a safer environment for all.

Links to campaigns in NSW, Queensland and South Australia:

www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/Media/docs/AntiViolencecampaign-f94c056f-68c5-466b-8ed7-2833369d8c28-0.pdf

QAS – Assault isn't part of the job. It's a crime.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYTOVXM8cg4>

SAAS – Keep your hands off our Ambos!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOX3fXSoNjk>