



15 MAR 2010

Mr Tim Jacobson
Assistant Secretary – HACSU
Email: tim@hacsutas.net.au

Mr Randolph Wierenga
President - Police Association of Tasmania
Email: randolph.wierenga@pat.asn.au

Mr Richard Warwick
Secretary – UFU Tasmanian Branch
Email: ufutas@southcom.com.au

Dear Gentlemen

Thank you for your jointly signed letter of 5 February 2010 seeking Labor's policy commitments with regard to emergency service workers.

Protection of Emergency Services Workers

Labor is firmly committed to protecting our emergency services workers and to ensuring that we are always looking at further ways to increase this protection.

This is why the Bartlett Labor Government has already indicated that we will be asking our new Sentencing Advisory Council to consider whether there should be a new indictable offence inserted into the *Criminal Code* to address serious assaults on our emergency services workers.

While any form of assault on any individual is not acceptable in our community, Labor believes that those who are assaulted while performing their duty beyond that of just emergency service officers should also be provided with an extra level of protection. For example, Child Protection officers are often in vulnerable situations when putting the interests of the child ahead of their parents, as are Community Corrections officers enforcing the orders of the courts on offenders. Labor will therefore extend the terms of reference for the SAC to consider what other types of occupations might be included in this offence.

The Bartlett Labor Government has already publicly indicated that we would also like the Sentencing Advisory Council to consider the introduction of guideline judgments for magistrates and judges.

The Tasmanian Law Reform Institute believes there is a potential case for them but stopped short of recommending them unless there is broad judicial and professional support. Labor would like the Council to canvass this potential approach with the judiciary and the profession in order to see if there is benefit in introducing it.

What guideline judgments would do is to address the tension which can often arise between maintaining judicial discretion in a particular case to ensure a fair and proper outcome is reached, against ensuring there is consistency in sentencing. It is possible that they may well act as a general deterrent by publishing the level of sentence for particular offences. They will act as a more transparent means of sentencing as they require a greater explanation of how courts come to arrive at their decisions. And they will also provide a means of allowing the community to have a greater input into sentencing.

Labor believes our Sentencing Advisory Council is best placed to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of introducing guideline judgments as a means of further strengthening our sentencing process and to ensure that consistency is maintained across the board.

Labor is also developing a new public awareness campaign to highlight the valuable role our emergency services workers play within our community in order to ensure they are treated with more respect and understanding for the vital role they play in looking after us all.

Emergency Services Workers Wages

Labor commits to ensuring that the salary of our emergency services workers remains at a comparable level to their mainland counterparts. We believe that is essential to ensure we continue to attract and retain the best possible workers.

Emergency Services Staffing Levels

Labor is committed to ensuring that our emergency services have appropriate staffing levels. The last thing we want is for the lives of Tasmanian people to be put at risk because we do not have enough staff in a particular area.

We will review existing staffing levels across the spectrum of police, fire and ambulance to make sure all areas are appropriately staffed and if not we will commit to improving those staffing levels.

The Bartlett Labor Government has already announced the addition of 30 extra police officers and our commitment to establish a dedicated Helicopter Emergency Medical Service will include the recruitment of up to 17 staff including doctors and paramedics to ensure the service is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Critical Incident Stress Disorder

The Bartlett Labor Government encourages all agencies to manage stress disorder with compassion and a view to satisfying the individual's expectations.

Labor remains committed to ensuring suitable mechanisms are in place to address the issue of employees and volunteers who are exposed to incidents that may lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

We will look to improve programs for emergency service workers so that employees exposed to Critical Incidence Stress Disorder receive the support required.

Labor will continue to provide excellent support to all employees who sustain a work related injury, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and will continue to fund the Critical Incident Stress Management Team (housed in Police and covers off police, fire and ambulance employees) and commits to review its efficacy in consultation with relevant unions.

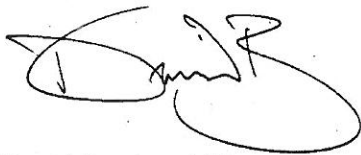
Rehabilitation of injured employees and their return to the occupation that they are employed in remains the Government's highest priority in line with the *Rehabilitation and Workers Compensation Act 1988*. Where employees are unable to return to their substantive positions all options will be explored which includes the option of their redeployment into other areas of the Government's workforce if appropriate.

Labor will investigate the practicality and benefits of implementing a redeployment system across the whole-of-government, recognising that emergency service agencies already endeavour to redeploy individuals to non-operational duties within their respective agencies.

The Bartlett Labor Government fully supports the current policy to work with employees where medical retirement may be required. In situations involving workers compensation Agencies will continue to work with insurers and in each case, and depending on individual circumstances, medical retirement will be considered and pursued where appropriate.

Again, thank you for your letter and for the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'David Bartlett', written in a cursive style.

David Bartlett MP
Premier