

Public Service Association of New South Wales  
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In reply please quote: NP:gs

23 June 2017

Simon A Y Smith  
Secretary  
Department of Industry  
Level 49 MLC Centre  
19 Martin Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**Attn: Simon Kempson**

Via email: [simon.kempson@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:simon.kempson@industry.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Smith,

The Public Service Association of NSW (PSA) writes regarding radio communications for Fisheries Officers and our concerns as to how this issue impacts on the safety of our members. To date we have had discussions at both the Annual General Meeting of the Fisheries Officers Vocational Branch (FOVB) and a more recent meeting with Mr Kempson and Mr Tully of your Senior Executive team.

It was agreed that the PSA should write to you outlining our concerns in relation to the radio communications issue.

The PSA acknowledges the good work that has been done to date in order to address the existing obsolete and antiquated radio communications network on which we have relied for many years. The roll out of access to the strongly resourced and professionally managed Government Radio Network (GRN) on the south coast of NSW has been a partial, but welcomed, step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, there are approximately 100 Fisheries Officers in the state of NSW that all have the same radio communication needs given the challenging and potentially dangerous nature of the work they do and the remote areas in which they undertake that work. So far, less than twenty Fisheries Officers have been issued new radio communications equipment and access to the wide ranging benefits of the GRN, thus leaving over eighty that are in need of the same.

The PSA considers this is a serious WH&S issue under section 19 of the Work health and Safety Act in terms of ensuring Fisheries Officer safety and, as a secondary consideration, operational capability. High quality radio equipment and access to the GRN is far superior to any communications coverage afforded by mobile phones for several compelling reasons including instantaneous transmissions, simultaneous messages between multiple officers, linked radios to relay messages from 'black spots' and the ability to communicate securely over vast distances.

It remains a particular concern that in many areas of the state Fisheries Officers have only been issued with mobile phones.

Yesterday, the NSW Government Telco Authority announced a multi-million dollar commitment to enhance the GRN to improve coverage from approximately 35% to an impressive 80% of NSW This

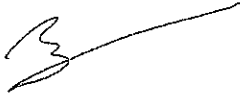
announcement makes it clear that the GRN is the way forward for not only Fisheries Officers, but most other public sector vocations that rely on radio transmissions in our state.

The PSA seeks a commitment to the urgent equipping of all Fisheries Officers in NSW with the required GRN access and radio hardware to address this significant issue.

In the meantime we seek urgent measures to ensure the safety of our members until a permanent resolution can be put in place. Such a matter may require a staged process and we remain willing to discuss this but we seek appropriate directions to staff and their managers that will effectively prevent or manage current dangers to the work health and safety of employees.

I can be contacted by email on [nplayer@psa.asn.au](mailto:nplayer@psa.asn.au) or by mobile on 0408432439.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. Player', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Player  
For Stewart Little  
**General Secretary**

Cc: Simon Kempson (Principal Manager Industrial Relations)



Department  
of Industry

Office of the Secretary

SECO17/189

Mr Stewart Little  
General Secretary  
Public Service Association of NSW  
PO Box 3365  
SYDNEY NSW 2201

**Attention: Nick Player** – email: [nplayer@psa.asn.au](mailto:nplayer@psa.asn.au)

Dear Mr Little

**Radio communications in NSW Fisheries (reference NP:gs)**

I write in response to your letter dated 23 June 2017 regarding safety concerns with radio use within Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Fisheries. The Department takes safety concerns very seriously and upon receipt of your letter I referred the matter to the Department's Director, Health & Safety for advice.

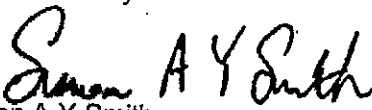
On the basis of this advice I can confirm that the Department of Industry is compliant with its obligations and duties under Section 19 of the *Work Health & Safety Act 2011*. The Department has a functional Safety Management System (SMS) that requires operations to identify hazards, assess risk and implement reasonably practicable controls to manage that risk. We deploy a number of controls for managing remote and isolated workers, taking into consideration such issues as duration of absence and cellular mobile coverage, among others.

I am also pleased to note that the Department's Fisheries Compliance Unit has done significant work with NSW Telco Authority on the Government Radio Network and will continue to do so.

Acknowledging the importance of worker health and safety, the Director General, DPI has requested Mr Michael Bullen, Deputy Director General DPI Agriculture, to undertake a review of all DPI processes and resources for the management of remote and isolated workers. This review will be supported by the Health & Safety Unit. I am advised that future procurement of communication equipment and services will be informed by this review.

Any questions regarding the above can be directed to Mr Simon Kempson, Director of Industrial Relations on (02) 6391 3341 including, if necessary, the facilitation of a meeting to discuss and clarify the Department's WHS commitments.

Yours sincerely

  
Simon A Y Smith  
Secretary

20 JUL 2017

