



# MEMBER UPDATE

## The Floggings Will Continue Until Morale Improves...

26 April 2018

Dear members,

A new process – the Professional Standards Panel – has recently been introduced by the Commissioner (recent amendments to CO2) in the pursuit of consistent decision-making following established complaint matters. The panel is chaired by NMPSS and includes NMRCS and at least one other national manager.

Last week saw a series of show cause notices emerge from the panel which have shocked our members to their very core. Following the investigation of an incident from 2016, the AFP now requires these members to demonstrate why their employment should not be terminated. We believe the circumstances of this incident are such that this response from the panel is a gross overreaction to the conduct involved. The AFP purportedly values its employees as its most important resource, however, this decision contradicts the Commissioner's public statements about protecting members' welfare and mental health.

The need for consistency in decision-making around the adjudication process is unquestioned. However, this consistency must have regard to the context of the established and understood organisational responses to particular types of conduct. Consistency is not achieved through making examples of members simply because a new process has commenced. Nor can consistency be claimed if it ignores all those decisions which preceded it. In this case, the conclusion of the investigation in November 2017 recommended administrative actions by PRS that involved counselling. Unfortunately, the panel has ignored these recommendations and previous responses to such conduct. Instead, the AFP has launched what we consider a savage response.

The effect upon the affected members has been utterly devastating. Since November 2017, these members have been of the belief their matters would be dealt with in accordance with the previous recommendations. To find out after all this time, suddenly and without warning, they are instead facing termination has severely impacted their mental health. To be told one human error is grounds to have your professional identity stripped from you is an extraordinary burden to process. The AFP wants you to know the service of a Show Cause Notice is a necessary step in the decision-making process and not necessarily a *fait accompli*. The reality is recipients feel they have already been terminated and they now need to argue their way back into the job. We recognise the need for this process in the most serious of circumstances where the conduct involved is unconscionable. This is not one of those occasions.

Our efforts at this time are focussed upon representing the interests of the members involved, in the

hope of having the panel revisit what we believe is an improper decision. On Monday we met with the Commissioner and COO and outlined to them our serious concerns.

Unfortunately, the opportunities for broader organisational learning from this and other sanctions processes are limited, due to the veil of secrecy blanketing these decisions. In circumstances where human error appears no longer to be tolerated, we are now in a dangerous place indeed.

Regards,

Angela and Graeme



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