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100 extra paramedics on duty in NSW

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, is presenting up to 100 paramedics with their qualifications at a special graduation ceremony in Sydney today.

The Class of 2008 includes paramedics from many areas of the Ambulance Service of NSW including, qualified paramedics, extended care paramedics and Special Casualty Access Team (SCAT) course instructors.

Mr Della Bosca said it was a privilege to be part of the first ever combined graduation ceremony and to celebrate the achievements of all those who have completed their training this year.

“With Ambulance NSW experiencing about one million call-outs each year, our paramedics are extremely hard-working and play a vital role in supporting the health and well-being of our communities,” the Minister said.

“In the short time that I have been Health Minister, I have visited a number of ambulance stations and met with many dedicated paramedics. I have been impressed with their professionalism and skills.

“When a member of the public rings triple zero and asks for an ambulance, they can be assured that they are going to be treated by highly qualified clinicians who are focussed on patient care.

“People who choose to work in the health service – whether they be doctors, nurses or paramedics are truly special individuals, and they deserve our utmost respect,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“When talking about achievement it is hard to go past our SCAT paramedics who so often have to place themselves in dangerous situations to save others.

“Today we provide qualifications for six new SCAT course instructors.

“In 2007/08 an additional 233 trainee paramedics have joined Ambulance NSW as part of the NSW Governments \$340 million commitment to providing extra paramedics for frontline duty,” the Minister said.

Mr Della Bosca is also joining paramedics, their families and friends to honour the bravery and courage of six paramedics.

Paramedics Paul Featherstone, Peter Cribbs, Peter Daniels, Michael Wilson and Lindsay Court will be awarded a Unit Citation for Courage for their commitment to duty under hazardous circumstances.

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“These SCAT paramedics displayed courage of a high order beyond that of expectation when responding to an incident at Wombeyan Caves in May this year,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The paramedics put their own lives at risk when rescuing a patient in a serious condition who had been trapped for 24 hours by fallen rocks and was suffering from dehydration, hypothermia and crush injuries,” he said.

Mr Della Bosca said the Ambulance Service of NSW Distinguished Service Medal - NSW Ambulance’s highest honour - would be presented to SCAT Paramedic Paul Kernick for his role in an Ambulance helicopter rescue at Pearce’s Lookout in Bilpin in September 2005.

“This outstanding paramedic abseiled 170 metres down a cliff to reach a patient who had fallen from the lookout and was seriously injured.

“It was a selfless act of courage which exemplifies the spirit of our ambulance service.

“Today’s graduates will join a service of high regard and it’s fantastic to see so many enthusiastic people choose this noble profession,” he added.