



10 July 2017

The Secretary
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Spring St
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission with regards to the Ambulance Victoria's (AV) reform as it may relate to the restructuring of Victoria's fire services.

Since late 2014, the Department of Health, Health Services and Ambulance Victoria (AV) have worked to implement the Ambulance Transfer Taskforce recommendations as part of the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee (APPCC). This committee was chaired by the Hon Jill Hennessy MP and brought together Paramedics, Ambulance Victoria and a range of key organisations to improve Ambulance Victoria's service performance and culture.

The committee's final report, *Victoria's ambulance action plan*, was released in December 2015 and this action plan provided an agreed set of priorities to transform both the delivery of ambulance services to the Victorian community, and the way Ambulance Paramedics are supported throughout their careers.

There were six major themes identified within the action plan;

1. Providing the right response to our patients
2. Improving our people's health, safety, wellbeing and capability
3. Improving access to care and patient outcomes in rural communities
4. Strengthening partnerships and collaboration with health services
5. Giving the community a greater say in their ambulance service
6. Achieving sustainability through innovation and a positive culture

To support tangible change, AV moved to breakdown the 6 major themes to key deliverables, accountabilities and clearly defined deadlines. These were framed in our Corporate Plan and were the premise of all reform activity. Whilst divisional accountabilities were established, many of the activities required cross divisional collaboration to ensure the strategic vision was maintained, and organisation wide reform was achieved.



Subsequently, over the past 2 years, we have achieved the following outcomes (including reference to their respective theme(s)), which have all formed part of Ambulance Victoria reform to date:

- The provision of the Mental Health Strategy (2)
- Implementation of Health and Safety Strategy (including manual handling) and power stretcher roll out. (2)
- The Mental Health and Health and Safety strategies led to a significant reduction in workforce injury (2)
- Provision of 40 hours annually access to training for every paramedic state wide (1,2,6)
- Revised response model, including the Dispatch Grid review redirecting low acuity work through to highly trained paramedics and nurses within our Referral Service (1)
- Development of new service models in partnership with local communities to provide sustainable approaches that take into account the different needs of communities across Victoria (1,3,4)
- Increased flexibility for staff accessing time off, and flexible rostering arrangements (1,2,3,6)
- Open and transparent communication with staff and their representative unions (2,4,5,6)
- State wide occupational violence training (2)
- Development and Implementation of organisational based Alcohol and other Drugs (AOD) Policies and support mechanisms
- Collaboration with DHHS for the provision of media about the appropriate use of Ambulance Victoria. (1,3,5,6)
- Community education and media about inappropriate behaviours and actions against paramedics. (2,4,5,6)
- Enhanced relationships with key stakeholders, including a stronger influence in operational communications with the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) (4)
- The development and approval of a future vision with the introduction of a five year strategic plan (1,2,3,4,5,6)
- Improved engagement with the community including the development of a Community Advisory Committee and release of the Consumer and Community Engagement plan (5)
- Development of new response models allowing for both improved career options for paramedics and improved alignment of resources against operational demand (1,2,4,6)

Specifically, with regards to people reform at AV (Improving our people's health, safety, wellbeing and capability), we have taken a systems thinking approach, meaning that we have holistically reviewed the way our people support functions were built, including the systems of work, policy and processes.



We have ensured that we have taken an engagement approach in all of our people focused work, and this has enabled difficult conversations with the workforce that may not have happened previously. A good example of that is the establishment of the Professional Conduct Unit and the introduction of the AOD program (and policy).

The development and implementation of the Health and Safety Strategy, has afforded us the opportunity to:

- Build leadership accountability for the health and safety of our people through visibility at the Board and Executive
- Implement contemporary training methodologies for occupational violence
- Enable significant reform in the management of WorkCover claims, with particular reference to mental injury including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The development and implementation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, has given us the opportunity to:

- Provide a safe space for us as an organisation to have the conversation about mental health
- Partner with experts (beyond blue) to build and deliver mental health training across AV
- Review all our current support services to ensure that they are fit for our purpose.

We have now also commenced work to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, including an AV workforce flexibility strategy and significant roster reform. This work is crucial in supporting the requirements of our organisation and workforce, and will be critical to AV's success moving forward.

Whilst we have achieved significant change, we still have considerable work to undertake, with the completion of the Corporate Plan deliverables, aligned to the *Ambulance Victoria action plan*, the first stage of a comprehensive and ongoing improvement strategy.

We are currently preparing to launch our new Strategic Plan, and this will focus on 4 clearly defined key outcomes:

- 'An exceptional patient experience'*,
- 'Partnerships that make a difference'*,
- 'A great place to work and volunteer'*; and
- 'A high performing organisation'*.

This strategic plan will lead our continued improvement over the next 5 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission and would welcome further dialogue as the review progresses.

Yours sincerely

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