



Shire of Mt Marshall

— THE SANDALWOOD SHIRE —

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE:
ENQUIRIES TO:

JN21 - 120
Mr John Nuttall

FILE: 4.0445

19 July 2021

Public Administration Committee
Parliament of Western Australia
Parliament House
4 Harvest Tce
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Sirs,

INQUIRY INTO THE DELIVERY OF AMBULANCE SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

On behalf of the Shire of Mt Marshall, please accept this submission to the committee in relation to the current Inquiry into the delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia.

The Shire of Mt Marshall is located in the North East Wheatbelt and relies upon the St John Ambulance service, staffed by volunteers from our local communities. The hospital located at Kununoppin is our nearest hospital service. The ambulance service for our area runs from the Kununoppin sub-branch which services Mt Marshall and other surrounding Shires, including Mukinbudin, Trayning, Nungarin and Koorda.

It is vital that the committee understands that the current service provided is exceptional. Whilst additional volunteers would always be helpful, all of the towns within the sub-branch provide ambulance drivers and staff. These volunteers are of the highest calibre, regularly demonstrating their skill, training and commitment to the local communities they serve. Response times, especially given the significant size of our region, are excellent. Additionally, the vehicles and equipment, mostly obtained by fundraising at the local level, are of the highest standard.

Whilst we are aware that there is a concern in Perth itself about so-called 'ambulance ramping' (although it is not clear to us why it is suggested that this is a fault within the ambulance service, rather than an issue within the hospitals themselves) we are very concerned that this City issue may have an unwanted and very detrimental effect upon the country service should the ambulance service be taken on by the State Government. In brief our concerns are as follows:


- The potential for a loss of current service level in the smaller, remote communities.
- The need to employ significant numbers of people to replace the volunteers – we do not believe this would be feasible which would likely lead to a reduction in ambulance staff numbers.
- The very real potential (likely for cost reasons) for services to be taken away from local sub-centres and placed in larger regional towns. This could have a significant impact upon response times and service levels. By way of example Merredin is a journey of around one and a half hours from Beacon (one of the towns in Mt Marshall).
- The potential effect upon our local hospital should there be no local ambulance service.
- The State Government has no history of running an ambulance service, and this lack of experience in such a significant area is a concern.
- It is believed that additional costs of the State running a service (those of the civil service) would ultimately mean less money is spent in the crucial area of service delivery.

The Shire would also invite the committee to consider the additional 'knock-on' factors which any loss or reduction of service would cause:

- It is already difficult to attract people to the regions to live and work. The chances of persuading a family to relocate to an area with diminished medical support and service would be greatly reduced.
- A loss of volunteers would have a negative impact across the community. Country towns thrive from its volunteer base and the loss of a significant volunteering opportunity it is believed would have a negative impact.

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide a submission into this inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

 John Nuttall
Chief Executive Officer