



**Hon John N Carey MLA
A/Minister for Health; Mental Health**

Our Ref: 76-20803
Your Ref: A997833 Petition No. 069

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Foster

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2022 requesting my comments on the terms of the Petition number 069 – Funding of Ambulance Services in Western Australia (WA).

The McGowan Government is committed to delivering quality healthcare, no matter where you live. As part of the 2022-23 State Budget, the State Government committed an additional \$30.1 million to deliver 18 additional paid paramedics and innovative new ambulance services in the bush.

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS), with St John Ambulance (SJA), have already delivered 26 extra paramedics across WA.

In response to the Standing Committee on Public Administration's (SPAC) Inquiry into the Delivery of Ambulance Services in WA, the McGowan Government has outlined a plan to overhaul ambulance service delivery in WA to better meet the needs of the community, which detailed strategies to expand the service delivery model and improve coordination of ambulance dispatch through a collaborative approach with SJA and other health providers.

Consistent with this plan, on 21 December 2022 the Government signed a new five-year contract with SJA for the provision of emergency ambulance services which provides for:

- An expansion of paid paramedics in the regions by 25%
- New KPIs and mandatory reporting measures for country ambulance to make SJA accountable for delivering high quality services to regional areas

- A new requirement that SJA to develop an asset investment plan and reinvest any surpluses back into new equipment, infrastructure, and vehicles
- The introduction of alternative inter-hospital patient transport (IHPT) providers in the regions to reduce the impost on volunteers and improve service delivery

With respect to your concerns about WA's existing user-fee model for ambulances, I note that only Queensland has a different model, where a levy is placed on utility bills to fund the state's ambulance services.

Western Australian residents over the age of 65 and in receipt of a full Australian Government pension can already access free ambulance services. SJA, supported by the State Government, waive the fee of pensioners who genuinely cannot afford the ambulance call out fees.

The Western Australian Government is currently working closely with the Department of Health (DOH) and SJA to explore alternative mechanisms to reduce the impost of ambulance fees on people experiencing financial hardship. This includes some of the suggestions made by the SPAC in its final report.

Through the Ministerial Taskforce on Ambulance Ramping established in mid-2022, we are also working with SJA on innovative solutions to address the reliance on ambulance transport for access to health care, including in the regions. This will relieve pressure on ambulances and improve health outcomes for patients by providing equitable access to the most appropriate form of care.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Kind regards



HON JOHN N CAREY MLA

A/MINISTER FOR HEALTH; MENTAL HEALTH

05 JAN 2023