

CORONAVIRUS — EMERGENCY SERVICES — EMERGENCY RESCUE HELICOPTER

6091. Mr S.K. L'Estrange to the Minister for Emergency Services; Corrective Services:

I refer to the State Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service, and I ask:

- (a) How many pilots/flight crew and maintenance crew are currently employed/contracted by the Department in the operation of the State Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service; and
- (b) What is the continuity plan to ensure continued operation of the Department's two emergency rescue helicopters should a crew member contract or test positive for COVID-19/Coronavirus;
- (c) What steps have been taken to protect the pilots/flight crew employees from COVID-19/Coronavirus?

Mr F.M. Logan replied:

- (a) As the State's only 24-hour, 7 day a week Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service, DFES employs through contracts a total of 9 Pilots, 9 Aircrew, 3 Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers and 14 Critical Care Paramedics (CCP) to deliver front-line service for the primary Jandakot and Bunbury-based Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service (ERHS) aircraft.

- (b) The ERHS is a vital emergency service and DFES and the ERHS contractor have a contingency plan in place to ensure it continues to service the community.

The continuity plan includes daily operating Infectious Diseases protocols/procedures. DFES has developed several Courses of Action (COA) to address continuity plans for different aspects of the service. This includes contingencies for accessibility/availability to parts, stock, medical supplies, equipment, PPE, and ERHS personnel.

- (c) All ERHS flight crew and maintenance personnel have been provided with the necessary PPE which is carried on-board the aircraft, as per normal procedure, so that it can be donned at the direction of the CCP when a patient is symptomatic or if a clinical risk assessment indicates potential COVID-19 infection. Appropriate decontamination procedures have been enhanced and implemented for both aircraft and personnel at each Rescue Helicopter Base.

To ensure continuity of the ERHS, DFES initiated a lock-down of the two Rescue Helicopter Bases to enhance social distancing and isolation of ERHS operational personnel.

All COVID-19 directives as issued by the State or Commonwealth governments have been continuously implemented and updated as new guidance is provided. This includes the elevated-levels of cleaning for each base, as well as more hand sanitisers and hospital grade disinfectants provided for staff.

To mitigate cross-contamination infection risks, DFES has further coordinated with each of the receiving tertiary hospitals to ensure "clean" and "dirty" paths have been established for the CCP when accompanying the patient from the rooftop Helicopter Landing Site down to the emergency room/operating theatre.