

30 July 2021

The Hon Pierre Yang MLC
Chair
Legislative Council Committee Office
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
West Perth WA 6005

Dear Mr Yang

**Submission to inquiry into the delivery of ambulance services in WA
(Ref: A896408)**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of the Royal Flying Doctor Service Western Operations (RFDS).

Ambulance services are essential to our daily operations, providing road-based patient transfers to and from our aircraft. These services are provided by St John Ambulance, with our mental health patients transferred by Wilsons within the metropolitan area. We acknowledge and value St John's commitment to working alongside the RFDS in regional and remote communities to support Western Australians needing care far from Perth's tertiary hospitals.

On average, the RFDS currently provides aeromedical retrieval for 27 patients a day in WA. In 2020-21, the RFDS experienced its busiest year on record, retrieving more than 10,000 patients and flying nine million kilometres across the State.

The delivery of all healthcare services, including ambulance services, requires built-in flexibility and the capacity to surge during periods of high demand. This is most effectively achieved through strong partnerships and collaboration between government, commercial and NFP healthcare services with a shared purpose to achieve the best possible outcomes for our patients.

Our operations team works closely with St John Ambulance to coordinate the most efficient inter-hospital transfers. St John's staff are embedded in our 24-hour operations centre at Jandakot which co-ordinates transfers from across Western Australia.

The RFDS operates a 24/7 service across all five of its WA bases, with a carefully balanced logistical network to provide maximum cover within our resources. Delays in ambulance transfers for RFDS patients have a negative flow-on effect for other regional patients awaiting retrieval and for frontline services across the network. While the RFDS does have clinicians and clinical facilities at each of its bases, these are designed to facilitate patient transfers and not purpose-built to hold patients for long periods.

Jandakot Base 3 Eagle Drive, Jandakot Airport, Jandakot WA 6164 T 9417 6300 F 9417 6309

Broome Base Gus Winckel Drive, Broome WA 6725 > PO Box 3672 T 9157 1100 F 9157 1101

Kalgoorlie Base Kalgoorlie-Boulder Airport, Kalgoorlie WA 6430 > PO Box 444 T 9000 2140 F 9000 2141

Meekatharra Base Meekatharra Airport, Meekatharra WA 6642 > PO Box 103 T 9947 3180 F 9981 1601

Port Hedland Base Waldron Road, Port Hedland WA 6721 > PO Box 2144, Sth Hedland WA 6722 T 9148 1160 F 9148 1172

> [Please support the RFDS by making an on-line donation at www.flyingdoctor.org.au](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au)

Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia Western Operations. ABN 29 067 077 696

We continue to invest significantly in our mission to provide the finest care to the furthest corners of WA. In the past decade, the RFDS has contributed more than \$100 million to health services in WA from funding provided by the people of Western Australia through community partnerships, fundraising and philanthropy programs. These programs enable the RFDS to provide community benefits far in excess of our service contracts with Government.

In an Australian first for the RFDS, two aeromedical helicopters will be integrated into the WA fleet in late 2021. These assets, purchased by the RFDS, will be able to provide end-to-end patient transfers, helping free up transfer assets for other patients.

This strategic initiative can provide part of the solution to expand available transport services while continually improving clinical outcomes.

In general, not-for-profit (NFP) organisations like St John Ambulance and the RFDS provide our society with important benefits and a strong service ethos that are worthy of support. To create healthy and sustainable community organisations, certainty in contractual agreements with the State is required so we can plan, innovate and invest in services to meet the current and future needs of Western Australians.

The RFDS' recent achievement of National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards recognises that we are first a health service provider, delivering excellent standards of clinical care throughout our patients' transport journey.

The RFDS will continue to work collaboratively with all its partners to provide the best possible outcomes for Western Australians. Regional Western Australians deserve the care of trusted organisations in their time of need.

Yours sincerely

Mr Sam Walsh AO
Board Chair
Royal Flying Doctor Service (Western Operations)