

CWA Bullsbrook & Districts Branch

Funding Ambulance Services in WA

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Our aims:

- to have a fully funded ambulance service, free at the point of use to all residents of WA
- to fully fund and resource all ambulance stations in WA

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- How we hope to achieve our objective:
 - letters to MPs, a petition, briefing relevant stakeholders
- What we are NOT getting involved in:
 - skill mix, findings of Parliamentary report, media reports

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- Brief overview of St John Ambulance WA
- Recent Parliamentary Report into SJA WA
- Present Financial arrangements & Fees - see following tables (Note that WA spend on ambulance services is lowest nationally)

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Table 5. Australian ambulance organisations total revenue 2019/20

| \$ m | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Government grants | 873.4 | 875.8 | 834.3 | 159.8 | 160.5 | 94.1 | 63.4 | 34.2 |
| Transport fees | 222.0 | 213.1 | 56.8 | 127.0 | 117.2 | 9.6 | 7.7 | 3.0 |
| Subscriptions and other income | 15.6 | 99.7 | 14.3 | 41.2 | 41.2 | 4.6 | - | 1.3 |
| Total revenue | 1 111.0 | 1 188.6 | 905.4 | 328.0 | 318.9 | 108.3 | 71.0 | 38.6 |
| Per person in the population | 136.68 | 178.70 | 176.48 | 124.28 | 181.26 | 201.70 | 166.17 | 157.59 |

[Source: Australian Government, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2021, 28 January 2021, Table 11A.1.]

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National comparison of Ambulance Organisations 2019-20

| | WA | NT | Tas | Vic | NSW | ACT | QLD | SA |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name of organisation | St John Ambulance WA | St John Ambulance NT | Ambulance Tasmania | Ambulance Victoria | New South Wales Ambulance | Australian Capital Territory Ambulance Service | Queensland Ambulance Service | South Australia Ambulance Service |
| Private/ Public | Private | Private | Public | Public | Public | Public | Public | Public |
| Entity type | An incorporated not for profit organisation under contract to the WA Government | An incorporated not-for-profit organisation under contract to the NT Government | A statutory service of the Department of Health and Human Services | A separate statutory body reporting to the Minister for Ambulance Services | A division of the ministry of Health reporting to the Minister for Health | Government department that reports to the ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services | A division of the Department of Health | A statutory incorporated entity reporting to the Minister for Health |
| Legislation | N/A | N/A | Ambulance Service Act 1982 (Tas) | Ambulance Services Act 1986 (Vic) | Health Services Act 1997 (NSW) | Emergencies Act 2004 | Ambulance Services Act 1991 (QLD) | Ambulance Services Act 1992 (SA) |
| CCC (or equivalent) oversight of ambulance service | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Metropolitan fees | \$1 006 | \$815 incl 10km + \$5.25km | Free for residents | \$1 265 | \$401-\$6571 (50% for NSW residents) | \$982 | Free for residents | \$1 044 +\$6km |
| Regional fees | Varies | | | \$1 866 | | \$681 | | \$233 |
| Treat and not transport | N/A | N/A | N/A | \$546 | N/A | \$681 | N/A | \$233 |
| Total revenue | \$328m | \$38.6m | \$108.3m | \$1 188.6m | \$1 111m | \$71m | \$905.4m | \$318.9m |

Source: Report 37 (May 2022), 'STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, Delivery of Ambulance Services in Western Australia: Critical Condition'

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What do we do now?

- We can share any stories of “fee shock” or reluctance to call an ambulance because of potential cost.
- Discuss how we can get petition supported & signed by as many community groups & members as possible.
- Today we can discuss how you can encourage your community to support this project

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- Letters to be sent to MPs - we will provide the structure, but letters need to be individual*
 - Planned timescale for letters and petition
 - Any questions?
- * Go to Parliament of WA website to find the name of your local MLA MP.

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Slide numbers relate to the slides on the attached page.

Slide 1

Good afternoon everyone.

Bullsbrook & Districts Branch would like to share with you their aim to persuade our Government to fully fund our ambulance service for all WA residents.

Slide 2

Ambulance stations in the Metro area are staffed by paid paramedics, and all their running costs are paid for by SJA.

In regional WA, there are 160 ambulance sub centres, of which the majority, 144, are staffed entirely by volunteers. The remaining 16 are staffed by a mixture of volunteers & paid paramedics.

Please note there are an amazing 4332 volunteer ambulance officers in WA.

These volunteers not only deliver ambulance services to their local communities, but they have to fundraise for vital equipment, replacement ambulances & for the upkeep of their sub centres.

Ambulance services in WA were initially funded by community subscriptions. The Lotteries Commission made its first annual grant to SJA WA in 1933. The State Government began financially contributing towards the ambulance service in the late 1940s.

Today the State Government contributes almost HALF of the total cost of an ambulance service in WA. In 2019/2020- 48.7% is Government grants

38.7% is transport fees (paid by other organisations & patients)

12.5% is described as subscriptions & other

It is not possible to further analyse these figures at this time.

It should be noted that WA residents >65 yrs old in receipt of an Australian Govt pension get free ambulance services, or if NOT receiving a Govt pension, a 50% discount.

The cost of ambulance services for >65 yr old pensioners is funded 50% by the Govt & 50% by SJA. Patients without either Private Health Insurance, or a SJA subscription for ambulance cover (NOT available in the Metro area), can expect to pay up to \$1000 for ambulance transport

Slide 3

As previously stated, our aim is to have an ambulance service free at the point of use for WA residents, as is the case in Queensland & Tasmania.

In addition, we believe all ambulance stations/sub centres should be fully funded, and that volunteer ambulance officers should not have to fundraise to provide & maintain that service.

We hope that by a coordinated approach of writing to our MPs, getting as many signatures as possible on a petition, and briefing relevant stakeholders, that we may persuade the State Govt to fully fund ambulance services in WA.

Text of 'Funding WA Ambulance Service' presented at CWA State Conference

However, it should be noted that we are not in any way trying to become involved in the management of ambulance services in WA, such as skill mix, nor in the recommendations of the recent Parliamentary Inquiry into SJA WA, nor in the sometimes inaccurate media reports.

Slide 4

SJA WA is an incorporated not for profit organisation under contract to the WA Govt. Its total revenue in 2019/2020 was \$328m – see Table 23/Slide 6, a printout of which is on your table.

Whilst ambulance services in the Metro area are provided by qualified paramedics, the vast majority of ambulance services in regional WA are provided by volunteers. Regional subcentres responded to 73,946 calls in 2020/2021, an increase of 22% since 2016/2017.

The recent Parliamentary report into SJA looked at many areas of its operation and made nearly 50 recommendations.

It is not our intention to try to influence, or get involved in, the findings of this report. However, it has provided useful statistics and background information. SJA will be working with relevant Govt departments and others, to implement the recommendations.

Slide 5

At present, the WA ambulance service is funded by a mix of

Govt grants, fees paid by individuals & organisations (such as WA Country Health Services-WACHS), for transport of patients to & from regional health facilities, eg Northam or Moora to tertiary Metro hospitals such as RPH or SCGH, subscriptions for ambulance cover, and fees paid by health insurance funds (eg HBF, Medibank etc), and of course individuals.

You'll see from Slide 5, you will see that the cost of ambulance services in WA per person in the population, is the LOWEST in Australia. No doubt this is for a number of reasons, but surely must be mainly due to the fact that 98% of the State's area has an ambulance service provided by volunteers, and those volunteers also have to fundraise to buy essential equipment & supplies for their sub centre. They also have to accommodate any bad debts associated with their subcentre.

Slide 6

This slide is showing a comparison of ambulance organisations nationally.

It confirms that Tasmania & Queensland provide ambulance services at no cost to their residents.

Slide 7

Probably most of us know, or have heard of, someone who has said "I didn't want to call an ambulance because I knew I'd get a big bill", or someone who did not know that calling an ambulance in WA costs a lot of money. In Queensland & Tasmania the

Text of 'Funding WA Ambulance Service' presented at CWA State Conference

ambulance services are fully funded through taxation, and so there is no charge for residents.

When I was a vollie ambo, I vividly remember going to a house where the parents were desperately worried about their young baby, but said they didn't know how they were going to pay for the ambulance. My colleague & I reassured them that their baby did indeed need to go to hospital for urgent treatment (it had stopped breathing & the father had successfully resuscitated it on the excellent instructions of the call centre). It transpired they had no car, were clearly very hard up, and to add to their worries, had no idea how they would pay a bill for the ambulance (many hundreds of dollars). A neighbour saw the ambulance, came over & gave the father his car keys so that he could get home & eventually bring his wife & baby home, and said that he was buying the family an early Xmas present of a family ambulance cover subscription.

I recently heard of a lady who went to the St John Urgent Care clinic at Midland, but when Triaged, was told she needed urgent hospital treatment, and would need to be transferred by ambulance. She was taken by ambulance to Midland Hospital, a journey of 1.5 kms, and subsequently received a bill for over \$1000! At the end of this presentation, we'd like you to discuss at your table any stories you have, and share them with us.

Also please discuss what groups you think might support our petition, eg Bush Fire Brigades, any community groups, sporting clubs etc.

It would be interesting to know how many of you here know about the ambulance cover subscription? How many of you actually have this subscription?

Slide 8

The letters we hope you will write to your MLA MP must not be carbon copies! You will each have a printout with some ideas & suggestions for your letters, and also where to find the name & details of your Legislative Assembly Member of Parliament.

Do please use your own ideas & experiences.

Letters need to be sent to your MP during the week commencing 9th October. They can be sent individually, or may be sent in one envelope by your Branch.

The petition, which will be presented to Parliament by a member of the Legislative Council, will need to be sent to Head Office by Thursday 6th October.

Any questions? If we cannot give you an answer now, we'll take them on notice and get back to you.