

# Putting Patients First



**Jaclyn Symes MLC**

Minister for Emergency Services

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## **BACKING OUR EMERGENCY SERVICES TO KEEP VICTORIANS SAFE**

The last two years have tested health systems everywhere.

Emergency departments and Triple Zero have had to handle a sharp increase in critical patients, healthcare workers have had to miss work because they or a loved one have fallen ill, and our hospital system has rolled out COVIDSafe practices which – while incredibly important – have complicated and slowed down care.

Right around the nation, demand for emergency services is at an all-time high. Our Triple Zero call-takers and dispatchers are dealing with unprecedented call volumes.

But when you call for an ambulance, every Victorian should have the confidence that there will be help on the other end of the line and someone to see you at the hospital when you need them.

That's why the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* invests in practical and immediate measures to cut wait times, expand emergency departments and get Victorians the help they need, when they need it most.

As the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority (ESTA) continues to respond to record demand from the pandemic, the Budget invests more than \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase Triple Zero call taking and dispatch capacity for Triple Zero services and training more operators to allocate calls across the state.

The Government has supported ESTA in addressing immediate COVID-19 related demand throughout the pandemic. This support has seen call-taking times improve – however sustained pressures mean more support is needed.

This significant funding boost will bring on more trainers and team leaders, build a better support and surge capability for busy times and provide further wellbeing support to look after our hardworking frontline staff. Funding for IT and security systems will also support ESTA to upgrade its operations.

The package also includes funding already announced in March to bring on more ambulance call-takers, better support and manage the workforce and deliver recruitment and community education campaigns around using Triple Zero.

Victoria is facing an increasing number of natural disasters requiring an emergency response. Nearly \$36.2 million over four years will keep the State Control Centre running 24/7 to meet this demand, allowing workers to respond to emergencies at a moment's notice, no matter the hour.

This will be supported with more than \$2 million for workers at Emergency Management Victoria to design, coordinate, implement and report on critical sector-wide reforms that will strengthen emergency management leadership and help for communities.

Our dedicated emergency services volunteers at VICSES will receive \$28.5 million to maintain their facilities, upgrade priority vehicles and help volunteers respond to floods and other emergencies.

This funding will also support the Government's ongoing work to improve the culture and safety of emergency service volunteer groups and encourage more women to join their local units.

We will continue to upskill and protect our volunteer firefighters with more than \$11 million over four years for CFA volunteer driver training as well as an upgraded emergency vehicle fleet.

To help our volunteer firefighters feel welcome and supported and to encourage more diverse people to join their local brigade, more than \$16 million will build female-friendly changing facilities at three training campuses and upgrades at 40 CFA stations.

This investment will also support PFAS assessments and decontamination of high-risk stations and appliances.

Volunteers at Life Saving Victoria will receive \$11.9 million for a range of programs, including to continue valuable water safety programs at public pools, helping more Victorians brush up on their swimming and water skills after many lessons were delayed due to the pandemic.

The funding will also go towards the redevelopment of the Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club and all-abilities infrastructure for the Seaford Life Saving Club.

Critical search and rescue capabilities in coastal and inland waterways will also be boosted with nearly \$3 million for Marine Search and Rescue to refurbish its fleet, buy more digital radios and to help them work with other emergency volunteer agencies on water safety responses.

#### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes**

*"We're continuing to back our hardworking emergency services with the support they need to do what they do best – protect and save lives."*

*"We're delivering more staff, more resources and better infrastructure – attracting more people to begin a rewarding experience in our emergency services."*

*"Our hardworking emergency call-takers have done their absolute best throughout unprecedented demand from the pandemic – we're ensuring they have the extra support they need to give Victorians the very best care."*