

Media Release

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Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

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Thursday, 19 May 2022

BUILDING A STRONGER TRIPLE ZERO SERVICE FOR ALL VICTORIANS

The Andrews Labor Government will transform our triple zero system to make sure Victorians can get the help they need in an emergency – with more call-takers and dispatchers, better support and training for staff and stronger governance.

The Labor Government supports in principle all 20 recommendations from former Victoria Police chief commissioner Graham Ashton’s review of the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority (ESTA), today released in full alongside the Government’s response.

Five recommendations are already well underway, with work on remaining recommendations to begin immediately.

The record \$333 million package funded in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* forms part of the Government response, and will deliver more than 400 staff, build a better support and surge capability for busy times, provide further wellbeing support to look after frontline workers, and support further IT and security system upgrades.

This funding is on top of 43 more staff funded last year – who have all now been recruited.

As part of the major structural reforms designed to ensure ESTA continues to improve and deliver a stronger service for all Victorians, ESTA will be supported by a new board of advisers which includes members of ambulance, police, emergency and fire services – helping better draw on expertise from across the emergency services sector.

Importantly, this new governance model will strengthen the partnership between ESTA and the state’s key emergency service organisations (ESOs): Ambulance Victoria, Country Fire Authority, Fire Rescue Victoria, Victoria Police and Victoria State Emergency Service.

ESTA will be brought into government with the form and structure to be agreed as part of the reforms to be progressed in 2023. This will allow ESTA to focus on its key, primary aim of stronger, faster call-taking and dispatch.

ESTA will also undergo a major rebrand – becoming *Triple Zero Victoria* – to better reflect its core call taking and dispatch function, ensure its role within the emergency services sector is properly understood and build a more positive organisational culture right across its workforce.

These reforms build on unprecedented investments and work from the Government that already address some of the key recommendations – which have seen response times steadily improving. These include:

- recruiting more call-takers and dispatchers
- faster training and better mental health support for staff
- strengthened leadership
- better technology services and IT

The proposed structural reforms will be subject to detailed consultation and legislative change – it’s critical we get them right. The Government will begin working with the ESTA board, ESOs, unions, the workforce and stakeholders on the recommendations’ implementation.

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The Government will convene ESTA Capability and Service Taskforces – chaired by the Department of Justice and Community Safety and ESTA, including unions and ESOs – to start work on that detailed consultation and establish implementation plans that will see the changes progressed.

The immediate priority will focus on the recommendations relating to call-taking and dispatch, managed services and technology services and intelligence capability with the major governance changes and reforms in relation to performance standards expected to follow in 2023.

Throughout the course of Mr Ashton’s review, call-takers faced unprecedented call volumes due to the pandemic. These surge events are the subject of a separate review by the Inspector General for Emergency Management (IGEM), which will be integrated into the reforms being driven by the implementation taskforces.

The IGEM has been tasked with monitoring the delivery of the Ashton review’s recommendations to ensure they continue to strengthen the delivery of services to the Victorian community.

The full report and the Government’s response can be found [here](#).

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes

“Our dedicated call-takers, dispatchers and other staff at ESTA have worked tirelessly to support Victorians in the face of sustained, unprecedented pandemic-related call volumes – we cannot thank them enough.”

“Victorians should have the confidence that when they call for help in an emergency, they will get it. That’s why we haven’t waited to release this report before giving ESTA the funding it needs to keep supporting Victorians as we keep seeing the lingering effects of the global pandemic.”

“We’ll continue to work closely with ESTA, ESOs, unions, workers and the sector to make sure we get these reforms right.”