

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



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BUILDING A STRONG AND RESILIENT TRIPLE ZERO SYSTEM

The Victorian Government is continuing to transform the state's Triple Zero system – making sure Victorians get the help they need in an emergency and strengthening our health system with more call-takers and dispatchers, better staff training and support, and stronger governance.

The Government has today released its response to the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM)'s Ambulance Call Answer Review and the Major Public Health Emergencies Review – accepting the findings and supporting all recommendations in both reports.

Work on many of these recommendations is already well underway to immediately improve ESTA's call-taking performance, following former Victoria Police chief commissioner Graham Ashton's review of the service.

ESTA has already brought on more than 150 new call-takers and dispatchers, provided more training, more flexible rosters, more mental health support for staff and created a surge pool of call-takers for periods of high demand.

The pandemic saw emergency ambulance call volumes increase from a pre-pandemic average of around 2,200 calls per day to nearly 4,000 at the peak of the Omicron surge. Our Ambulance Victoria paramedics responded to more than 93,000 Code 1 callouts in the January quarter, breaking the record set in the previous quarter.

Since these reviews began, the Government has made significant investments to strengthen Victoria's emergency call-taking service – with more than \$333 million to meet demand, bring on more than 400 extra staff, build better support and surge capability for busy times and provide more support to frontline workers.

This investment has seen vast improvements in call-taking performance since January 2022 – the IGEM has advised the Government that August 2022 call-taking performance has seen 92.8 per cent of all calls answered within five seconds, exceeding the benchmark for the first time since October 2021.

We're also getting on with helping the health system to recover from the pandemic and prepare for the future with the \$12 billion Pandemic Repair Plan – delivering better hospitals, and training and recruiting more than 7,000 extra healthcare workers to get ambulances back on the road quicker and give patients the care they deserve.

Earlier this year, the ESTA Reform Program Government Taskforce was set up to oversee the implementation of the Ashton Review recommendations. Given the alignment with the recommendations of the Ambulance Call Answer Review, this Taskforce will also oversee these recommendations.

The Taskforce will keep progressing more complex reforms expected to be complete by December 2023, including bringing ESTA closer to government, rebranding it to Triple Zero Victoria and appointing a new board of advisers.

The IGEM reports and the Government's response can be found on the [IGEM's website](#).

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes

"I offer my deepest sympathies to those who have lost their loved ones during the pandemic."

"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."

"Building on significant investments and major structural reforms already underway, we are using the lessons from these reviews to prepare our system to be strong and resilient into the future."

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