



Victorian Healthcare Association

3 June 2008

Geoff Lavender
Director, Programs Branch
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne 3001

Dear Geoff

SUBMISSION: VICTORIAN HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION LTD
Future of ambulance service delivery in Victoria: Consultation Paper

The Victorian Healthcare Association welcomes the opportunity to respond to the "Future of ambulance service delivery in Victoria: Consultation Paper" [The Proposal].

The Victorian Healthcare Association

The Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA) is the major peak body representing the interests of the public healthcare sector in Victoria. Our members are public hospitals, rural and regional health services, community health services and aged care facilities. Established since 1938, VHA promotes the interests of its members.

In preparing this submission, VHA has consulted with its members and distilled a shared position aimed at improving the health of Victorians. This submission remains the position of VHA and does not supersede any submission or position stated by any member agency.

For more information regarding this submission, please contact David Towl, Research and Policy Officer: david.towl@vha.org.au 03 9094 7722.

Overview

The VHA is in broad support of The Proposal believing the end result will better meet the needs of Victorians and the public healthcare sector servicing their needs.

Service Delivery

The VHA is supportive of the moves made by the Government to equate ambulance service delivery across metropolitan and rural platforms and is aware of many of the issues covered in this section of the consultation paper. As the sole jurisdiction in Australia with more than one Ambulance Service, Victoria's move to service centralisation is positive.

In accord with Federal and State Government policy directions, VHA believes that Ambulance Services play an important role in the prevention and early intervention of disease. Paramedics are widely recognised and respected professionals who have episodic contact with patients at times where they are more likely to be receptive to health advice and information.

As a 'health' focus in rural and remote communities, Paramedics, Ambulance Community Officers and Auxiliaries can champion population health service approaches within their community.

Recommendations:

- 1. VHA supports the establishment of a state-wide ambulance service for Victoria**
- 2. VHA recommends that the Government investigates the role that Ambulance Victoria can play in delivering health services from a population health and prevention approach. This may include amending Section 15 of the Ambulance Services Act 1986**

Governance and Accountability

Victoria's unique model of community governance of health services should be celebrated. While VHA supports transitional governance arrangement to support the process of merger, VHA sees no reason to unnecessarily delay a new appointment process to create a new Board to govern Ambulance Victoria into the future. To this end it is acknowledged that a blend of existing Board members and new members independent of the existing structures (MAS, RAV, ADAS) should be evident when the new Board is formed. As a process of good governance, VHA also recommends the appointment of an independent Chair of the newly formed Ambulance Victoria Board.

In 2007, VHA published a position statement titled 'Changing Governance within the Victorian Healthcare System'. This document suggests that in the development of a recommendation for change in Governance, the following should be achieved:

- A robust and transparent process for the determination and specification of service delivery
- Clear articulation of all alternative options available to achieve the specified objectives
- Evaluation of all options identified against appropriate objective criteria
- Basing any recommendation on the evidence produced by the evaluation

A copy of VHA's position statement is included for your information.

Recommendations:

3. ***VHA recommends that the board appointed to govern a merged ambulance service into the future comprise a minority representation from the existing three services and be Chaired by a person independent of the existing three ambulance services. The processes behind these appointments should be transparent and robust and should occur in the short-term.***

Interactivity with Health Services

VHA supports the recent trend in Rural and Regional Victoria to co-locate ambulance stations with health services as a matter of Government Policy. VHA believes that the co-location of services provides resource efficiencies to the government and builds collegiality between paramedics and health service staff.

Extension of co-location arrangements to include paramedics assisting with patient care and stabilisation at health services are also viewed as positive. Such arrangements assist with skills maintenance and awareness for paramedics as well as supplementing hospital workforces when presented with high acuity cases.

Any co-location or shared service agreements need to be lead and supported at a state-wide level with flexibility at the local level to meet local needs. VHA is interested in supporting this endeavour.

Recommendations:

4. ***That the principle of co-locating ambulance stations with health services be supported and extended at a state-wide level; building on resource efficiencies already apparent.***

Conclusion

The VHA supports the proposal outlined in the consultation paper and makes four recommendations related to Service Delivery, Governance and Accountability and Interactivity with Health Services. We welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the Department and to represent the public healthcare sector as plans for the proposed merger evolve.

Please contact us for clarification or assistance on any of the points made in this response.

Yours sincerely



Trevor Carr
Chief Executive