



SA
Ambulance
Service

Regional Impact Assessment Statement

Centralisation of the South East Communication Centre in Mount Gambier

1.0 The Issue

SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) is centralising the South East Communications Centre at Mount Gambier, transferring operations to the State Communications Centre in Adelaide.

2.0 Regions Impacted

The major towns in the South East region impacted by the centralisation include: Bordertown, Padthaway, Lucindale, Naracoorte, Penola, Nangwarry, Millicent, Kingston SE, Robe and Mt Gambier.

3.0 Stakeholders

- Staff of South East Communication Centre
- Local Community – both Mount Gambier and the surrounding districts
- Local Health Service Providers
- Local Councils
- Royal Flying Doctor Service

4.0 Consulted Parties

- SAAS Staff (including volunteers)
- Health Service Providers
- Local Councils
- Emergency Services Organisations
- State Government
- Ambulance Employee Union

5.0 Consultation

- Letter sent to all identified stakeholders in November 2003 advising them of the changes to local service provision as a result of a strategy to centralise SA

Ambulance Service Communication Centres that was approved by the State Government in May 2002.

- Letter to the South East community was published in regional papers in November 2003
- Various local media interviews
- A paper was tabled at the November meeting of the Emergency Services Leadership Group
- A Community Forum was held in Mount Gambier (Thursday 4 December)
- Individual meetings were held with
 - o The Hon Rory McEwen MP (Minister for Industry, Trade and Regional Development, Member for Mount Gambier) – 25 November 2003
 - o South East Regional Health Service – 4 December
 - o Mount Gambier Council (CEO and Mayor) – 4 December
 - o Grant District Council (CEO and Mayor) – 4 December

6.0 Summary of Impacts

6.1 Economic Factors

SAAS is aware regional employment is a key concern for both the Government and regional communities and every attempt has been made to redeploy staff into the South East area to ensure that resources are not lost to the region.

Three staff in the South East Communications Centre are affected by this centralisation. Two are returning to the road, while the other will assume a new role supporting volunteers in the South East.

The savings that are achieved as a result of the centralisation of the Mount Gambier Communications Centre will be redirected back into the region to enhance service provision and provide additional support to volunteers. SA Ambulance Service will be adding at least an additional 6 paramedics to the region in 2004.

6.2 Social Factors

With only one person on per shift, the Communications Officer has multiple responsibilities as they are responsible for call taking, dispatch and resource co-ordination within the defined geographical area. This multi-tasking, and the fact that they are the only person on shift, can prevent them from giving pre-arrival first aid advice, something routinely offered from the Adelaide Communications Centre. Centralisation of the Mount Gambier Communications Centre to Adelaide will therefore provide significant benefits to regional patients.

6.3 Environmental Factors

Not Applicable

7.0 Mitigation

- Increase of staff in the Adelaide Communication Centre to ensure a seamless transfer of workload at the time of consolidation
- A Change Management Plan for the affected staff is in place. Affected officers are being individually managed, and individual training development plans are in place for each person.
- SA Ambulance Service has made every attempt to redeploy staff into regional areas.
- There will be an overall increase in regional resources in the South East with an additional 6 staff in 2004.

8.0 Coordination

Key emergency services personnel have been notified in writing of the closure of the SE Communications Centre. Chief Executives of the CFS, MFS and SES were contacted as well as the Southern Operations Superintendent of SAPOL.

A paper was also prepared for discussion at the Emergency Services Leadership Group meeting held on 11 November 2003.

On a local level, SAAS Regional Managers have consulted with regional ESO management on this issue (CFS, SES, MFS, SAPOL) as part of their regular interface meetings.

Ambulance response to incidents will be improved by having a single point of contact for coordination and control. The removal of geographical boundaries will reduce complexities that can arise when an incident occurs on the fringe. Emergency services, clients and patients will have a single point of contact for ambulance services.

9.0 Preferred Option

SA Ambulance Service has fully explored the following alternative options:

9.1 Retain South East Communication Centres and do nothing more

Benefits

- No incremental expenditure

Risks

- SA Ambulance Service cannot access Government Radio Network in regional areas
- Increased risk to public safety without redundancy options or equipment upgrades
- Risks associated with single person operations
- Increased expenditure to support regional ambulance and volunteer services

9.2 Upgrade South East Communication Centre to access Government Radio Network

Benefits

- Access to Government Radio Network

Risks

- Increased risk to public safety without redundancy options during transition to Government Radio Network
- Increased risk to public safety without other (non Government Radio Network) equipment upgrades
- Risk of single person operations
- Increased expenditure

9.3 Upgrade equipment and provide access to Government Radio Network

Benefits

- Access to Government Radio Network provides more redundancy options therefore reducing public safety risks
- Retains regional employment opportunities

Risks

- Significant increase of expenditure
- Risk of single person operations

9.4 Upgrade equipment and increase staffing

Benefits

- All of the above

Risks

- Significant increase in expenditure
- Sufficient and appropriate staff cannot be sourced

Upon consideration of the benefits and risks of these alternatives, **the preferred option was:**

9.5 Closure of the South East Communication Centre (Services Consolidated to Adelaide)

Benefits

- Retention of regional employment
- No incremental expenditure
- Improved service delivery to customers

Risks

- Change management or transition not managed well