



**SA  
Ambulance  
Service**

## **Regional Impact Assessment Statement**

### **Centralisation of the North West Communication Centre in Port Pirie**

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#### **1.0 The Issue**

SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) is centralising the North West Communications Centre at Port Pirie, transferring operations to the State Communications Centre in Adelaide.

#### **2.0 Regions Impacted**

The regions serviced by the North West Comcen include the Yorke Peninsula, and major towns Whyalla, Pt Augusta, Pt Pirie and Pt Lincoln.

#### **3.0 Stakeholders**

- Staff of North West Communication Centre
- Local Community – both Port Pirie 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 to be sent to all identified stakeholders in February 2004 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 North West community to be published in regional papers prior to closure.
- Various local media interviews before and after closure.
- A Community Forum to be held in Port Pirie
- SAAS will be meeting in person with the following people in February / early March:
  - o The Hon Rob Kerin MP, Member for Frome
  - o Ms Lyn Breuer MP, Member for Giles
  - o Mrs Liz Penfold MP, Member for Flinders
  - o The Hon Graham Gunn MP, Member for Stuart
  - o Port Lincoln Council (CEO and Mayor)
  - o Whyalla Council (CEO and Mayor)
  - o Port Augusta Council (CEO and Mayor)
  - o Port Pirie Council (CEO and Mayor)
  - o CEO/DON major hospitals in the region
  - o Local CFS Commanders
  - o Local MFS Managers
  - o Local SAPOL Personnel
  
- SAAS will also meet with other parties who express particular questions/concerns about the centralisation.

## **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 will be made to redeploy staff into the North West area to ensure that resources are not lost to the region.

Five staff in the North West Communications Centre are affected by this centralisation, all of whom are committed to working in the Port Pirie Comcen until closure. At this point SAAS is unsure exactly what area these staff will continue their careers.

SAAS has appointed an external expert to work with these staff members in relation to their future career direction, whether within SAAS or otherwise.

At least one staff member has expressed an interest in commencing a role supporting volunteers in the North West region.

The savings that are achieved as a result of the centralisation of the Port Pirie Communications Centre will be redirected back into the region to enhance service provision and provide additional support to volunteers.

SAAS has already assigned a Regional Team Leaders (RTL) to Kadina and Clare to support volunteers, an additional staff member is planned for Pt Pirie

as well as a country rostering coordinator and a volunteer administrative and HR support officer in Pt Pirie.

Other planned initiatives to add further resources to the area include the introduction of a Regional Medical Transfer Service (RMTS), a new station at Wallaroo and a new proposed combined emergency services complex at Clare.

## **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 Port Pirie 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 will make every attempt to redeploy staff and current resources into regional areas.
- Significant efforts are being directed to capturing and recording information, such as unique landmarks and other points of interest specific to the region. This will ensure that Adelaide comcen operators have adequate local information to dispatch cases in regional and remote areas.

## **8.0 Coordination**

Key emergency services personnel will be notified in writing of the closure of the NW Communications Centre. Chief Executives of the CFS, MFS, SES and SAPOL will be involved in this process.

On a local level, SAAS Regional Managers will consult with regional ESO management on this issue (CFS, SES, MFS, SAPOL).

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 North West Communication Centre 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 North West 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** is:

### **9.5 Closure of the North West 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
- Technical difficulties / failures