

21 January 2022

Hon. Jeremy Rockliff
Minister for Health

By email: jeremy.rockliff@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Minister,

We write to you to raise concerns that have been reported to the Australian Paramedics Association Tasmania (**APA**). There is growing concern amongst paramedics that important leadership positions at Ambulance Tasmania (**AT**) have not been backfilled at this critical time.

As you would be aware, the Tasmanian health system was already strained before the pandemic and the recent increased demand due to the pandemic has added to the pressure. We are told that the worst is yet to come. Leadership is an integral part of retaining effective control and planning in these uncertain times. It is important to have visible and present senior leaders to navigate the way through this critical time.

Several of our members have raised their concerns that the Regional Manager (RM) positions at AT in both the North and North West Regions have not been backfilled while the positions are vacant with leave and other circumstances. The North West RM position has been vacant since 28 September 2021. The Northern RM position has been vacant over the past 3 weeks while the substantive RM is on recreational leave.

Currently both those RM positions are being caretaken by the Director of Clinical Services, Mike McDermott, while he continues to work in his busy substantive position. Having these important roles empty and being caretaken by a leader who is not even in the region is irresponsible at the best of times, let alone during a pandemic. The effect of unfilled positions is also detrimentally impacting the health and wellbeing of Operations Managers in both regions by increasing their workload and responsibility at an already stressful time. Additionally, these staff are now effectively undertaking the role and tasks of the RM position without fairly being remunerated for doing so. Both the North West and the Northern regions have Operations Managers who have been appointed as capable 2ICs and should be asked to act up into the vacant positions. Not instigating this obvious backfilling is causing paramedics to feel concerned that the planning and leadership that should be occurring, is in fact not occurring.

Paramedics are reporting to APA that the failure to backfill two critical leadership positions during this pandemic is a service failure. AT staff are looking for consistent and present leadership during a time where emergency services are being stretched with the increased demands of the pandemic. We also note that lack of leadership and inconsistent management structure was identified as a problem during the recent coronial inquest.

We call on you Minister, to immediately investigate the current practice of not backfilling senior leadership positions and immediately instigate full time coverage of these positions from staff who are permanently employed in the respective regions. This is necessary for paramedics to have trust that the leadership and support that they need will be available to them.

Regards

Australian Paramedics Association Tasmania