

# Plea to fix 'unsafe' paramedic staffing



Ambulances lined up at the Royal Hobart Hospital on Wednesday.

Picture: Chris Kidd

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THE staffing model for Ambulance Tasmania is unreliable and unsafe, a group representing paramedics says.

The Australian Paramedics Association says more than 200 additional paramedics and support staff are needed statewide to fix growing demand and the worst response times in the country.

It said only the Greens' state election policy pledge achieves much of what they believe is needed to properly address the issue.

The Greens have announced a plan for 224 more paramedics to be employed statewide. Labor has pledged an extra 144 while the Liberals have promised to recruit an additional 48.

The APA has recommended 183 more paramedics be employed, in addition to 16 critical support staff, 23 operational support staff and two psychologists. It has called for 34 new vehicles to be added to the fleet and four new stations built, which is provided for in the Greens' policy.

APA spokesman Patrick

Tomkins said those stations would be introduced to high demand and poorly resourced areas such as Rokeby, Legana, the Channel and Ouse.

Mr Tomkins said while there were 54 stations across the state, three were non-operational. Of the 51 operational locations, 14 were staffed entirely by crews of two salaried paramedics, 21 by a single on-shift paramedic supported by a volunteer if available and 16 were volunteer-only stations.

"Over 70 per cent of Ambulance Tasmania's stations

rely on the goodwill of volunteers for roster coverage. This model is unreliable, unsustainable and unsafe," he said.

"Volunteer shifts are unable to be covered with paid overtime which leaves many single officer paramedic responses across the state on a day-to-day basis."

Mr Tomkins said depending on a person's location, they would not always receive a fast response from a qualified paramedic.

Labor has promised to recruit an additional 144 paramedics in its first year of

government if elected, while also pledging to upgrade more than 30 locations to have 24/7 cover and build two new stations at Oakdowns and in the Channel.

Under the Liberals' policy, 48 permanent paramedics would be recruited over two years, while investing \$9m to upgrade Ambulance Tasmania's vehicle fleet.

The Greens would also invest in 34 new vehicles, build four more ambulance stations and establish a formal trauma support program for paramedics.