



M23/2098

Ambulance resources in Tocumwal

Writer	Mr Matthew Hannan, Mayor, Berrigan Shire Council
Analysis	<p>There has been a longstanding campaign by the residents of Tocumwal to have a dedicated ambulance station located in the town.</p> <p>Tocumwal is serviced by paramedics from Finley and Berrigan ambulance stations and Community First Responders.</p> <p>An updated assessment by NSW Ambulance regarding ambulance responses confirms that Tocumwal is appropriately serviced by the current model. Due to higher priority locations within NSW experiencing more significant demand, Tocumwal is not currently identified for the establishment of a new ambulance station.</p>

Key issues

The Tocumwal community has NSW Ambulance Community First Responders

NSW Ambulance has Clinical Volunteer units across NSW. These units are made up of either community-based volunteers, emergency service partners (Fire and Rescue NSW, State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service) or local health district models. Members of these units are trained, credentialed, and provided with clinical equipment by NSW Ambulance to deliver immediate care in advance of paramedics arriving on scene.

The Tocumwal Community First Responder unit was established in 2010 with Fire and Rescue NSW. The Fire and Rescue NSW volunteers are paid a retainer fee to respond to incidents and attend regular training sessions. They can advise of their availability or if they are unable to respond.

The Tocumwal community is serviced by the Murrumbidgee Zone

The Tocumwal community is serviced by the Murrumbidgee Zone, primarily Berrigan (about 39km or 27 minutes under normal driving conditions) and Finley (about 21km or 16 minutes under normal driving conditions), which have ambulance stations.

Under the Statewide Workforce Enhancement Program, NSW Ambulance received an enhancement of 700 additional paramedics over a period from 2019 to 2022. The Murrumbidgee Zone benefited from an enhancement of 37 paramedics.

Tocumwal's proximity to existing services at Finley and Berrigan means that a station in Tocumwal would not supersede other priorities in the foreseeable future. The staffing levels at neighbouring Finley and Berrigan stations were assessed as adequate for the response area, including Tocumwal.

During periods of higher demand, resources are fluidly deployed where they are needed most

Paramedics are a mobile workforce and respond from one patient to the next across locations, regardless of whether they are located at a hospital, an ambulance station or another location. During periods of higher demand, resources are fluidly deployed where they are needed most.

NSW Ambulance performance in the Tocumwal response area

In 2022, 562 incidents were responded to in the Tocumwal response area, including 209 Priority 1 (P1) incidents. This was an average of 1.5 incidents every 24 hours.

In 2022, the Tocumwal Community First Responder unit recorded 192 responses.

In 2022, 462 transports were recorded in Tocumwal response area with 59% of priority P1 and P2 patients transported to Tocumwal Hospital.

The average response time for P1 incidents in Upper Murray excl. Albury SA3 (October to December 2022) was 15 minutes.

The average response time for P1A life threatening incidents in Upper Murray excl. Albury SA3 (October to December 2022) was 8 minutes, which is 2 minutes under the 10-minute target average response time for P1A incidents.

The population in Tocumwal is expected to grow from 2,862 to 3,314 people between 2021 and 2031 (Source: Department of Planning, Industry and Environment). This represents a total population growth of 5.8%.

Service planning methodology

NSW Ambulance has an existing service planning methodology to ensure the communities' clinical needs are met. The need and priority for additional ambulance services are continuously monitored, considering the following criteria:

- the volume of demand in a town and surrounding area
- distance from any ambulance service
- current response times to emergency incidents
- modelled improvement in response times if an ambulance station was commissioned
- assessment of capacity and condition of the closest ambulance station
- the capacity of a NSW Ambulance volunteer service to respond.


The current level of P1 incidents in Tocumwal response area suggests there may be merit in gauging community interest about transitioning to NSW Ambulance Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) for reducing response times to life-threatening emergencies where early delivery of clinical care can make a significant difference to patients' health outcomes.

Quality and safety challenges of stations with low demand

The establishment of stations in locations with sufficient demand is a significant factor in the assurance of the quality and safety of paramedic services as the level of demand ensures that staff have sufficient patients with whom they can maintain their clinical skills.

A minimum of 12 full time paramedics is required to establish a new service such as that requested at Tocumwal. A station with a demand level of 405 emergency patients a year would only offer each paramedic an opportunity for one patient contact every 2 days on average resulting in significant challenges for maintaining clinical skills.

Contact

Name	Position	Phone and email
Bernard Coren	Acting Associate Director, Service Planning	

Approval

Name	Position	Date
Dr Dominic Morgan	Chief Executive, NSW Ambulance	18/05/2023

The Hon Ryan Park MP
 Minister for Health
 Minister for Regional Health
 Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast



Ref: M23/2098

Councillor Matthew Hannan
 Mayor
 Berrigan Shire Council
 [REDACTED]

Ambulance resources in Tocumwal (your ref: KE:KM)

Dear Mayor

Thank you for writing about ambulance services for the residents of Tocumwal.

I acknowledge your concerns and appreciate your advocacy on this matter.

NSW Ambulance is committed to the wellbeing of patients and communities across the state. I am advised that NSW Ambulance conducts regular analysis of all locations in NSW to identify areas of growing demand for the prioritisation of resources. This includes using best practice modelling software that maps Triple Zero (000) calls to determine the most suitable location for emergency care, including examining current response areas and modelling potential station locations to meet community needs.

NSW Ambulance uses up to date population projections provided by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and monitors factors such as demographics and population growth when planning for future service provision, as well as proximity to existing services and general ambulance coverage.

NSW Ambulance Service Planning has identified that, based on current demand and projected growth, Tocumwal is not currently the highest priority location for the establishment of additional services, relative to other locations. NSW Ambulance will continue to monitor demand in the area for future decisions about new services.

NSW Ambulance has Clinical Volunteer units across NSW, who form an important part of the service delivery model. These units are made up of either community-based volunteers, emergency service partners (Fire and Rescue NSW, State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service) or local health district models. The Tocumwal community is serviced by the Murrumbidgee Zone and the NSW Ambulance Community First Responder unit, who are trained, credentialed and provided with clinical equipment by NSW Ambulance to deliver immediate care in advance of paramedics arriving on scene.

Paramedics are a mobile workforce and usually respond from one patient to the next across NSW, regardless of whether they are located at a hospital, an ambulance station, or another location. Vehicles and their paramedic crew are moved throughout their shift to provide geographical coverage of ambulance resources across NSW. During periods of higher demand, NSW Ambulance can fluidly deploy resources to where they are needed most, helping deliver the best possible out-of-hospital care for the community.

Bureau of Health Information data for the October to December 2022 reporting period shows the median time it took an ambulance to reach the highest priority (life threatening P1A) emergency cases in the statistical area which Tocumwal falls within was 8 minutes, which was within the 10-minute target. More information about NSW Ambulance performance, including response and turnaround times, is available on the Bureau of Health Information website at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au/BHI_reports/healthcare_quarterly.

NSW Ambulance has received funding for more staff and ambulance stations. This investment will mean improved patient outcomes and will provide better services for the community of NSW.

Thank you again for writing. For more information, please contact Clare Beech, Executive Director, Clinical Systems, NSW Ambulance, at clare.beech@health.nsw.gov.au or on 9320 7870.

Yours sincerely



Ryan Park MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Regional Health
Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast