

Ambulance Employees' Association of South Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

AMBULANCE UNION AGAIN ALARMED AT WORST RAMPING EVER

The Ambulance Employees' Association (AEA) will hold a media conference today at 1130 at the union's offices, 13 Hindmarsh Place, Hindmarsh to talk about the past two days disastrous levels of ramping.

The situation at the RAH is appalling and the ED overcrowding and ramping is impacting on the whole state. Ramping is a glaring and avoidable high risk result of Emergency Department (ED) overcrowding; and it must be stopped.

Ramping was at epic proportions on Wednesday and Thursday this week. On Thursday around 31 ambulance were ramped at the RAH and FMC. 20 at the RAH, 11 at FMC.

Whilst this was going on, there was a frightening shortage of ambulance resources to care for the community. AEA Secretary, Phil Palmer, said today "our members have been reporting to us that there were periods where only two or three solo responders were available in the whole metropolitan area". "An un-named Government spokesman has denied the union's claim, but we have heard all that before; our members are reporting this to us, so it is anecdotal, be we have found in these circumstances that where there's smoke, there's fire." Mr Palmer said. "SA Ambulance provided data to the SA Employment Tribunal that clearly demonstrates significant shortages (at times about 20 ambulance crews short)"

SAAS data tabled at the Tribunal shows considerable shortfalls in crewing across extended periods. Showing an even more bleak picture of SAAS's ability to provide ambulance resources.

"Any suggestion that there are enough ambulances is simply spin" Mr Palmer said.

"SA Ambulance and ED's are experiencing workloads that have remained at winter-peak highs, we are fearful of the coming winter when workload will climb even higher and the risks to the community will escalate even more. Lives will be at risk" Mr Palmer said.

In the lead up to the SA election last year, the AEA received a clear undertaking from the Liberals to "take tangible steps to address ambulance ramping and strengthen the surge

capacity of individual hospitals". Palmer said, "The promised timeline of July this year is well behind us, but ramping is getting worse, not better."

"There are already not enough ambulance resources, and this is compounded by ramping. SA Ambulance Priority 1 and 2 case response times have been compromised putting South Australians' lives at risk", Palmer said. "It is only a matter of time; it cannot go on like this."

"Treasury have been sitting on a bid for more funds for more staff for nearly a year, meanwhile the Ambulance Service are spending about \$660,000 every fortnight on overtime to keep the service running (see graphs attached tabled by SA Ambulance to SAET):

- SAAS average around \$660,000 per fortnight in overtime costs over the 70 week period. That figure equates, very roughly, to around 400 O/T shifts per fortnight.
- The total overtime cost for a 70 week period reviewed would be in excess of \$22 million.
- Post shift Overtime is reported at 22.7% (12,446 occasions of late knock-off) of all shifts over the period in review.
- Overtime accounts for around 10% of total wages bill. This figure would be higher as a proportion of Operational Staff wages.
- Other than reporting the facts and data that clearly demonstrate an over-reliance on overtime, SAAS proposed no solution to the issue.

An exasperated Mr Palmer said "It is past time for the Government to stop spinning and start doing" Mr Palmer said " Give the SA community the ambulance service it deserves, and STOP the ramping."

Authorised by Phil Palmer, AEA Secretary 0419 815830 or 8340 3511

Attachment: SA Ambulance overtime figures. Figures do not include post-shift overtime.

