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Ambulance decision just in time for Christmas

Increased Government funding for St John’s Ambulance has come just in time for the holiday season and may save Territorian lives, according to the Shadow Health Minister Dr Richard Lim.

Dr Lim said St John has been under-resourced for some time with paramedics paid inadequately and less than their interstate colleagues.

The Government announced today that it would not take control of the ambulance service despite being pressured to do so by unions. A health expert has conducted an extensive investigation into St John and the Government is expected to release the report today.

“I have been saying for months now that St John Ambulance Service is efficient but has been inadequately resourced from the Government,” Dr Lim said.

“It is particularly appropriate that this decision has been made in time for the Christmas holiday break. St John are the front-line medics for Territorians unfortunate enough to be involved in an accident.

“The Government has wasted thousands of dollars commissioning another consultancy to review the service when there have been several reports previously, all saying the same thing. And that is that St John Ambulance Service is efficient but that the Government is not resourcing it adequately.

“Following a coronial decision and criticism of the ambulance service that it failed to respond adequately to calls for assistance, St John must now respond to every call. That means a huge increase in demand on the physical resources and on personnel.

“Many of these calls were to people who are not subscribers to St John Ambulance Service, nor have the capacity to pay for the ambulance to attend. The additional funding from Government will allow St John to address the need for this increase in service.

“I am however disappointed that the Minister’s additional funding for this year is only to address the needs of the Top End. Tennant Creek and Alice Springs have missed out altogether at a time when ambulance services to these two regions are stretched to the limit.

“Tennant Creek ambulance service is struggling to retain adequate staff levels. Alice Springs service is inadequate in the evenings, when only one vehicle and crew is available.”

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