

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 482a**

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND ACCESS TO  
HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN RURAL,  
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

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## **Addendum: To submission 482.**

Since filing the referenced submission, the NSW Government announced a funding boost for NSW Ambulance (NSWA) of \$11.72 million for 69 new Intensive Care Ambulances; 50 of which are earmarked for regional NSW.<sup>1</sup> Given this development, I feel it necessary to offer further comment to the original submission. While the announcement offers a great headline opportunity, I contend it is vital the Committee appreciates that Intensive Care Ambulances do not save lives, so I ask the development be approached with great caution.

What saves lives in country NSW is when seriously ill patients are brought swiftly into the care of paramedics with the training, scope of practice and equipment necessary to resuscitate them, stabilise them, and keep them alive until they reach a hospital capable of managing their condition. We don't need intensive care ambulances to do that – we need our country paramedics trained to the higher level they would now be trained to, but for the unconscionable wrong NSW did to country people in derailing the aim to train all country paramedics to Advanced Life Support (ALS). I will not repeat that already said in the original submission save to say, of the 50% of country paramedics who had been trained to ALS prior to the maladministration which was the "Review of Clinical Services", the vast majority were subsequently upskilled to Intensive Care and have operated, albeit on an ad hoc availability basis in country NSW for decades – all without an intensive care ambulance in sight.

When the salient facts are distilled it is plain that "Intensive Care Ambulances" per se, do not save lives. They really only differ to the other Mercedes Sprinters parked at ambulance stations across country NSW in two ways. Firstly, rather than having signage saying "Emergency Ambulance" on the side – they have "Paramedic Intensive Care" plastered down the side. (Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Email - Chief Executive NSWA - all staff – 18/02/20 - Subject: *New Intensive Care Ambulance Fleet Announced*.

Secondly, they have extra storage compartments to safely carry equipment which should be on every single ambulance in country NSW. Equipment such as mechanical CPR (mCPR) devices which can be quickly deployed in a cardiac arrest so that a robot performs the chest compression component of CPR – thus relieving the need to have a paramedic “on the chest” at all times. In smaller country towns in particular, where just two paramedics are available, these robotic devices can turn that crew of two into a crew of three in an instant. The paramedic “on the chest” is then free to perform the tasks necessary for the patient to have a chance - long before back up arrives from another town or “on call”.

I submit that \$11.72 million dollars would have been much better spent upskilling country paramedics in line with what public inquiries have recommended time and time again and by placing mCPR devices on every country ambulance.



Figure 1

Respectfully,

Christopher Cousins