



Tuesday 23 October, 2007

PARAMEDICS BEGIN TRAINING TO DELIVER EXTENDED CARE

NSW Minister for Health, Reba Meagher, announced the first 12 ambulance paramedics would this week start clinical training as part of the Ambulance Extended Care Paramedic program.

Ms Meagher said under the program, highly skilled and trained Extended Care Paramedics would assess patients with low-acuity or sub-acute conditions and, where appropriate, identify and initiate alternative non-emergency department care.

“The NSW Government is delivering on its State Plan commitment to keep people healthy and out of hospital,” Ms Meagher said.

“Traditionally, when ambulance officers respond to calls for assistance they have had only two options: provide on-the-spot treatment or transport the patient to a hospital Emergency Department.

“This program is about providing more options for patient care. It provides ambulance officers with the additional training and support they need to assess patients who don’t require emergency treatment and to identify and initiate referral advice for General Practitioners and other community-based health care.

“It will also relieve the pressure on our hospital Emergency Departments and provide those who do not require emergency treatment with timely, alternative care.”

The Extended Care Paramedic program is being trialled for 12 months, with officers based in metropolitan and regional areas.

Twelve Extended Care Paramedics will operate in the Sydney West Division. They will be based at Penrith Ambulance Station and will cover the areas serviced by the Penrith, Springwood, Warragamba, Richmond, Tregear and Colyton ambulance stations.

Two Extended Care Paramedics will work from Tuncurry ambulance station within the Hunter New England Area Health Service and two will be based at Port Macquarie ambulance station. These four officers will commence training in early 2008.

Ms Meagher said the Extended Care Paramedics would be in addition to existing staff levels at those ambulance stations participating in the trial.

“Paramedics involved in the program will undergo an initial eight-week clinical training course at the University of Sydney Nepean Clinical School,” Ms Meagher said.

“The training will focus on improving their knowledge in areas of non-acute presentations, triage and risk assessment, clinical decision-making, clinical communication, patient assessment, focussed diagnostic tests, advanced skills, expanded pharmacology and clinical disposition.

“Once they are on the road, the Extended Care Paramedics will target patients with minor injury and illness such as lacerations and wounds, sporting injuries, falls, and minor back pain.”