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New generation of ambulances to treat patients in their own homes

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, announced today the State Government had rolled out a new generation of ambulance on the Central Coast to treat patients in their own homes and alleviate the pressure on local Emergency Departments.

Mr Della Bosca said the new \$65,000 mini-ambulance was one of 10 being introduced across the State this year.

“These vehicles are a part of NSW Ambulance’s Extended Care Paramedic initiative and were developed by paramedics for paramedics,” the Minister said.

“These ambulances attend to patients with minor injuries and illnesses such as lacerations and wounds, sporting injuries, falls and minor back pain. They are also a mobile office featuring mobile telephones, computer and on-board printer,” he said.

Member for Gosford, Marie Andrews, said that during a trial on the Coast, the ambulance responded to 101 requests for assistance, resulting in 40 per cent of patients not being required to be transported to an Emergency Department.

“The cases it has been responding to include patients with catheter problems, wound assessments and care and falls,” Ms Andrews said.

“For patients it means they do not need to be transported to an Emergency Department where they would have to wait while more seriously ill and injured patients get treated,” she said.

The ambulances carry a lot more specialist equipment and medicines than standard vehicles including:

- Wound care kit including dressings, burns dressings, suture pack and tissue glue.
- Pregnancy testing kit.
- Intra gastric tubes.
- Splinting kit for sprains and fractures prior to x-ray and treatment.
- Peak flow meters for assessing asthma attacks.
- Extensive range of drugs not used by standard care ambulance including specific anti biotics, advanced asthma drugs and inhalers, allergy treatments and tetanus and diphtheria vaccines.

“Through the State Government’s \$485 million *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW*, Hospital in the Home programs are being expanded,” the Minister said.

“To support out of hospital care NSW Health has also trained 22 ambulance Extended Care Paramedics who assess and treat patients without the need to attend emergency departments,” Mr Della Bosca said.

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“Three of these paramedics are now working on the Central Coast,” Mr Della Bosca said

“Additional extended care paramedics will be trained targeting rural areas,” the Minister said.

“The Garling Report into NSW public hospitals advises we need to do more to alleviate the pressure from our Emergency Departments.

“Providing treatment on the spot in people’s homes is one way of achieving this and that is what is being delivered through the Caring Together action plan.

“Ambulance officers who apply to become an Extended Care Paramedic undertake a nine-week basic training course attached to a tertiary teaching hospital clinical school with ongoing education to meet program and professional needs,” he added.