



Coolamon's first NSW Ambulance Station to support delivery of high quality care to the community

media release

Commissioner Dominic Morgan, Chief Executive NSW Ambulance today visited Coolamon to meet with the contingent of local residents currently training to become NSW Ambulance Qualified Volunteer Ambulance Officers (VAOs) and hand deliver their uniforms which feature the organisation's iconic roundel.

Commissioner Morgan said once they graduate, the Qualified Volunteer Ambulance Officers will support locally based paramedics in delivering high quality out of hospital mobile emergency care from the first NSW Ambulance station to ever be located in the town when it becomes operational later this year.

"Our NSW Ambulance paramedics and these trained and qualified Volunteer Ambulance Officers represent a significant enhancement in the availability of medical services for Coolamon, which averages less than one Triple Zero (000) call per day," said Mr Morgan.

"Supporting locally stationed paramedics with NSW Ambulance trained Qualified Volunteer Ambulance Officers builds a safety net in this community. It allows us to medically assist the Coolamon community from the local area 24/7."

NSW Ambulance has worked collaboratively with the local community and staff since 2014. Extensive review and community consultation was conducted through town meetings and the establishment of a Committee including NSW Ambulance representatives and the Coolamon Shire Council General Manager which resulted in the development of the endorsed NSW Ambulance Health Service Plan for the Coolamon Shire.

Member for Cootamundra Katrina Hodgkinson, who has played a key role in the delivery of the new ambulance station says she believes the mix of NSW Ambulance paramedics and qualified Volunteer Ambulance Officers will provide a valuable addition to the health care services in the community.

"Volunteers are the backbone of the Cootamundra electorate and I have every confidence in their ability to work effectively alongside paramedics. I'm proud to have fought to secure a new ambulance station for Coolamon and the community is very much looking forward to its opening," said Ms Hodgkinson.

NSW Ambulance has more than 400 trained volunteers working to support paramedics across the state with the blended staffing model applied and working elsewhere.

"This model has been carefully assessed and is in place elsewhere in the state and Australia. I have today maximised my visit to Coolamon to meet with industrial bodies here and have asked them to provide advice on a viable proposed staffing model that would see the community maintaining coverage when paramedics are out of town transporting patients to hospital and is safer than what our paramedic led group of experts, who have cautiously considered all options and scenarios, have deemed the best model, in the rare case of two emergencies at the same time," said Mr Morgan.

The first Coolamon VAO induction training course started 10 days ago. Paramedic Educator Steve Trood said the training covers clinical care such as advanced first aid, advanced resuscitation and CPR, NSW Ambulance vehicle familiarisation and resource management, legislation guidelines and procedural requirements.

"So far they have already learned, through a series of practical and theoretical sessions and tests taught by NSW Ambulance Paramedic Educators, CPR training, how to use a defibrillator, pharmacology, infection control, oxygen equipment use, airway obstruction, diabetic emergencies and how to manage and assist an unconscious patient," said Mr Trood.

"This is a proven program and is the best training they can get to prepare them for their role as a Qualified VAO. This group of Volunteer Ambulance Officers in training are already very much like all of our qualified volunteer ambulance officers across the state - willing to put massive amounts of time into their community and into their own training to help others in need."

One of the seven local residents taking part in the first Coolamon VAO training course, Denise said she is looking forward to putting the skills she's learned to use.

"I was really excited when I found out that NSW Ambulance was recruiting for people to become Volunteer Ambulance Officers at the new ambulance station in town and see it as a great opportunity to give back to my local community," said Denise, who lives at Ganmain.



Retired school teacher Martin from Coolamon is also part of the first training group.

“The training I’ve received from NSW Ambulance has been first class and it will be a real privilege to work alongside paramedics delivering care to patients in need, right here in my town where we’ve never had ambulance facilities before,” said Martin.

The blended model of operations is one of many volunteer models across the state and is already operating at Tottenham. Also meeting the Volunteer Ambulance Officers in training were paramedic/Qualified VAO duo Alan Flavel and David Lewis who spoke to the group of their experience in delivering mobile emergency care to the community together.

“We are like a family at the station. Our Qualified Volunteer Ambulance Officers care as much as full time paramedics do and bring a wealth of local knowledge that is of huge benefit when we are responding to patients,” said Mr Flavel, Paramedic and Station Officer at Tottenham.

“The experience they gain on the road with us and their ongoing learning requirements ensure that they work seamlessly as part of the team.”

Delivered under the NSW Government’s \$122 million Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration (RAIR) program, the new Coolamon Ambulance Station has finished construction and will undergo a thorough fit-out and commissioning stage before it becomes operational later in the year.

The Volunteer Ambulance Officers in training also toured the new station, gaining insight from the Commissioner, paramedics and other Qualified VAOs about operations once they commence.

“Qualified VAOs are trained to deliver life-saving care and I am certain they will work well here with the town’s first locally-based paramedics, responding to patients requiring mobile emergency care,” said Mr Morgan.

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On-Site Media Enquiries & Interview Requests:

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