



19 November 2021

Hon. Jaclyn Symes
121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne 3000

By Email: jaclyn.symes@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Hon. Jaclyn Symes

Re: ESTA Planned Pandemic Arrangements

Dear Hon. Jaclyn Symes,

Thank you for meeting with Ambulance Employees Australia Victoria (AEAV) Delegate, Sharyne Doensen on Monday the 15th of November 2021 to discuss the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority's (ESTA) Planned Proposal for Pandemic Arrangements, and the long-held staffing issues employees have faced at ESTA before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has put pressure on ESTA, which has been relying on overtime shifts to fill peak periods. Call-takers and Dispatchers at ESTA have continued to step up to the increased demand, but the service cannot reach its IGEM standard to answer 90% of calls in 5 seconds.

Knowing they are not performing adequately, ESTA has provided emergency services unions with a "Proposal for Pandemic Arrangements" and requested that unions reach a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) until June 2022. The proposal asks workers to commit to the use of labour-hire for a pre-triage service but does not provide any risk assessment of the potential impacts a pre-triage service could have on the community and the workforce.

Union members have struggled to agree to the MOU without certainties from ESTA that they will acknowledge the services long-held issue of understaffing and promise to advocate on staff's behalf for increased funding for improved baseline staffing levels.

Since writing to ESTA, the union has not received a response from ESTA and instead was sent the unamended MOU requesting that the union sign the document. Members are gravely disappointed in ESTA's inability to respond to their concerns.

There have been unreasonable demands on the ESTA workforce who have struggled to secure annual leave, some applying 18 months in advance to secure time off from what is an incredibly difficult job.



ESTA advocates for psychological wellbeing and provides staff with Peer Support and external psychology services however, the AEAU union Workplace Stress Survey Results from May 2021 found the main cause for staff stress is workload.

Participants were asked to rate out of 100 their levels of stress over the last week because of workload. The cumulative score was extremely low, at 19/100. Only 7 respondents gave staffing levels a rating above 50. I have attached the results to the Workplace Stress Survey for your review.

AEAV members would like to thank you for calling a review of ESTA's capabilities by former Victorian Police Commissioner Mr Graham Ashton. We hope that you will join us in advocating for ESTA to be independently resourced by the Victorian Government with a direct operating budget to ensure the service is equipped for increased demand, and that Call-takers and Dispatchers are recognised as an integral part of the emergency services system in Victoria.

Yours faithfully

Brett Adie
Secretary
Ambulance Employees Australia Victoria (AEAV)