



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

# Ambulance services Western Australia

A framework for statewide ambulance  
service operations





## **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Department of Health acknowledges traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land and waters on which ambulance services are delivered. The Department pays respect to all members of Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

# Director General's foreword

The State of Western Australia is responsible for providing ambulance services to Western Australians, including an emergency call service across the State.

Access to ambulance services is essential for all people in Western Australia. These services, which provide patient transport, pre-hospital care, and vital support in public health and State emergency circumstances, are an integral part of the health system. The World Health Organization describes access to an ambulance service as “characteristic of a high-quality healthcare system which improves the health outcomes of a community”.

Ambulance service organisations, and the people who staff them, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, other health professionals, ambulance transport officers, communications officers and volunteers, play a critical role in protecting the health and welfare of the community.

Whether the ambulance service is responding to a Triple Zero call or supporting health services in transporting patients to a more appropriate level of care, there is a community expectation that the request for services will be met with a timely and coordinated ambulance response, regardless of geographical location or clinical condition.

This Framework signals to the Western Australian community that the State expects its ambulance services, whether government entities or contracted providers, to deliver services to a consistently high standard, meeting safety and quality requirements, legislative obligations, and the policy objectives of government, including those set out in the State's Sustainable Health Review.<sup>1</sup>



The Framework supports delivery of improved equity of access to effective ambulance services across Western Australia that are safe, timely, responsive and reliable, patient-centred, and based on clinical need.

Importantly, publication of the Framework allows service consumers, and the wider community to readily understand what is expected of the ambulance system.

**Dr D. J. Russell-Weisz**  
Director General  
Department of Health

The Department of Health expressly acknowledges the interface of ambulance services with general practitioners and private hospitals and health services and the important contribution these entities make to the safe transport of patients in Western Australia.

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Health Review. (2019). Sustainable Health Review: Final Report to the Western Australian Government, Department of Health, Western Australia.

# A framework for statewide ambulance service operations

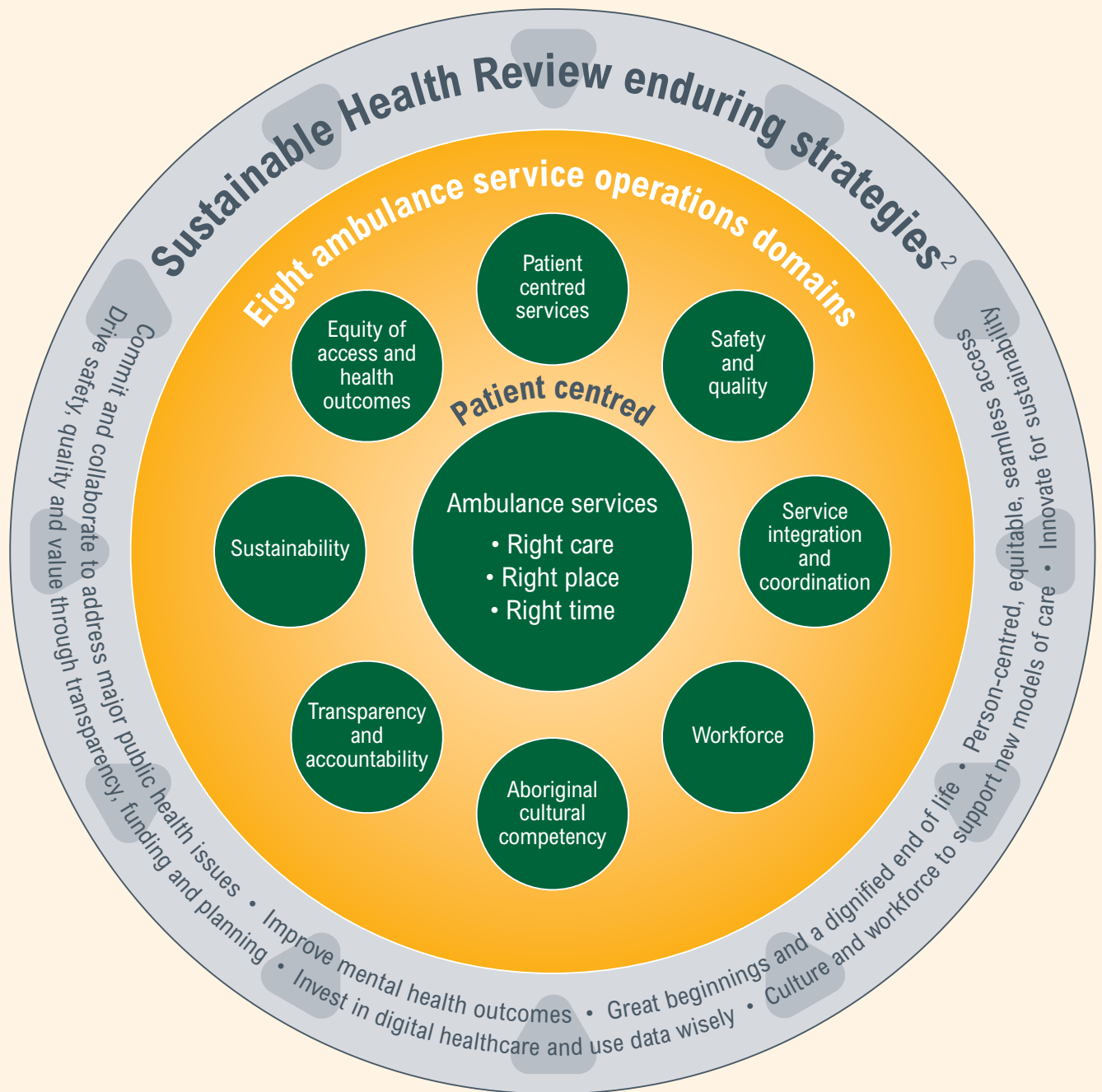
Ambulance transport is an essential emergency service provided by the Western Australian Government that the community expects to be available and responsive when pre-hospital care is required. All people in Western Australia must have access to safe, timely, reliable and coordinated ambulance services that are patient-centred and based on clinical need. Ambulance services response may be either primary patient transport (patients located in the community seeking medical assistance) or inter-hospital patient transport (planned transfer of patients between hospitals).

Ambulance service organisations are those organisations that deliver ambulance services, including pre-hospital care, and transport services. Ambulance services in Western Australia are delivered by numerous ambulance service organisations, including health service providers and entities contracted by the Western Australian health system. Patients may be transported by road and by air, and transport may include interfaces between different ambulance service organisations, particularly in country Western Australia.

The Framework provides a conceptual infrastructure for Western Australian ambulance service operations conducted within the scope of the *Health Services Act 2016*. It sets out the fundamental principles and overall direction for delivering ambulance services, providing guidance on the expectations of government, and the Department of Health Chief Executive Officer (the health system manager). This document will also guide future development of more detailed service delivery and procurement requirements, including for specialist ambulance capabilities.

There are **eight domains** of ambulance service operations identified in the Framework that align broadly with the Sustainable Health Review enduring strategies.

# Ambulance service operations domains



2 Sustainable Health Review. (2019). Sustainable Health Review: Final Report to the Western Australian Government, Department of Health, Western Australia

# Eight domains of ambulance service operations

## 1. Patient-centred services

The individual needs of the patient are at the centre of ambulance service provision, focused primarily on meeting clinical needs, but also accessible and inclusive for diverse cohorts, and for vulnerable consumers and their carers.

Ambulance service organisations ensure that patients receive the right pre-hospital care, at the right place and at the right time, including timely conveyance to hospital as clinically required.

Patient confidentiality and privacy is protected as far as the law allows.

Patients experience continuity of care when transitioning between different parts of the Western Australian health system and ambulance service organisations.

Ambulance services are culturally competent. This means they are responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Western Australian community and the varying consumer needs arising from this diversity.

Ambulance services are delivered in a manner that is accessible to – and inclusive of – people with disability and that does not reinforce stereotypes.

Ambulance services are delivered in a manner that is accessible and inclusive of older Western Australians, sensitive to the clinical conditions that commonly occur in older people including sensory and mobility deficits, cognitive impairment (including dementia) and frailty.

Ambulance services are delivered by appropriately trained staff in a manner that reflects trauma-informed care and practice, recognising the prevalence of psychological trauma and demonstrating sensitivity to its dynamics and impacts.

Ambulance service organisations ensure that patients experiencing mental illness, homelessness, or the impact of alcohol or other drug use, receive services in a manner that does not create or perpetuate stigma.

Ambulance service organisations transport people experiencing mental illness in accordance with the principles set out in the Charter of Mental Health Care Principles, the National Safe Transport Principles and the Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care 2015, and in accordance with applicable legislation.

Requests for Western Australian Police Force involvement to assist in patient transport are limited to where the patient is a significant risk of harm to themselves or to others and the ambulance service organisation is not able to safely manage the patient.

Ambulance services are delivered in a manner that is inclusive and respectful of patients who identify as LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex).

Ambulance service organisations engage with carers and family where appropriate.

Ambulance services are able to provide transport for patients with special needs (including bariatric patients or those with guide dogs, wheelchairs and carers) subject to aviation safety requirements.

Ambulance service organisations provide appropriate and sufficient information to ensure that patients can make informed decisions about pre-hospital care, including the benefits and risks involved.

Ambulance service organisations respect the wishes of patients expressed in an advance health directive to the fullest extent practicable in accordance with Western Australian law.

Ambulance service organisations ensure that patients receive a timely and appropriate response to complaints made about their experience of ambulance services.

## 2. Safety and quality

Ambulance service organisations are nationally accredited to ensure safety and quality for consumers, and services are compliant with applicable Australian and Western Australian legislation and regulations, and the Western Australian Department of Health's safety and quality policies including clinical incident management and clinical governance policies.

Ambulance services are accredited to national safety and quality standards, including clinical governance standards, and non-compliances are appropriately detailed to the accountable accrediting body.

Ambulance service organisations ensure that ambulance services function in accordance with a clinical governance framework that is representative of the services they deliver.

Ambulance service organisations' safety and quality standards are consistent with those in place at public health service facilities operating in Western Australia.

Evidence-based clinical guidelines underpin clinical decision-making, including transport priority and clinical escalation decisions.

Ambulances and equipment used for patient transport are fit for purpose, maintained, and compliant with relevant Australian and Western Australian legislation, regulations and standards.

Ambulance personnel use equipment safely and appropriately to meet the needs of patients.

Ambulance service organisations meet non-clinical quality management and quality assurance standards including the ability to conduct regular quality audits and demonstrate continuous improvement.

### 3. Service integration and coordination

Interface between ambulance services, and between ambulance services and other parts of the Western Australian health system are co-ordinated and seamless.

Ambulance service organisations share data and information with each other and with the Western Australian health system to facilitate co-ordinated delivery of ambulance services.

Ambulance service organisations are equipped with appropriate technology including communication devices that enable the crew and/or ambulance service personnel to maintain reliable and continuous communication with the Western Australian health system and the ambulance system.

Ambulance services organisations provide real time data to support effective management of demand and co-ordination.

Communication about patients' clinical condition and transport priority is based on common terminology, including clinical prioritisation definitions.

Ambulance service organisations communicate the estimated time of departure and arrival of the ambulance to the person, health practitioner or organisation requesting ambulance attendance.

Patient hand over between ambulance service organisations is based on the ISoBAR model to enable continuity of patient care.

Ambulance equipment is interchangeable between ambulance service providers and hospitals.



## 4. Workforce

Ambulance service organisation personnel are professionally accredited and adequately supported to ensure patients' needs are met.

All health practitioners employed by ambulance service organisations are registered pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (WA) 2010* and ambulance service organisations ensure that registration is maintained.

Ambulance service organisations ensure that scope of practice for health practitioners and volunteers is clear, consistent and understood across ambulance service organisations, the Western Australian ambulance system, the Western Australian health system and the Western Australian public.

Ambulance service organisations comply with the National Volunteer Standards.

Ambulance service organisations ensure that all personnel, including volunteers, have access to professional development and training opportunities, supporting professional progression.

Ambulance service organisations promote, measure and improve workforce diversity outcomes, and comply with Australian and Western Australian equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation.

Ambulance service organisations take responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their employees and volunteers, ensuring that they are not injured or harmed because of their work, and implement evidence-based strategies to minimise mental health impacts including post-event trauma on first responders, other employees and volunteers.

## 5. Aboriginal cultural competency

Ambulance service organisations are continually working to enhance the cultural competency of their personnel to help reduce disparity in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Ambulance service organisations respond to Aboriginal patients, their families and communities in a manner that values their unique identity and experiences as First Nations people and acknowledges the ongoing impacts of systemic racism and discrimination.

Ambulance service organisation personnel participate in ongoing Aboriginal cultural competency training.

Ambulance service organisations commit to achieving Aboriginal employment and retention targets consistent with those set by the Western Australian Government.

Ambulance service organisations actively engage with Aboriginal contractors when selecting sub-contractors and procuring goods and services to promote Aboriginal participation in their operations.

Ambulance service organisations collect Aboriginal ambulance service consumer data and make this available to the Department of Health as required.

## 6. Transparency and accountability

Ambulance service organisations are accountable to both the people and Government of Western Australia, and this is achieved through public reporting of performance and financial data, robust evaluation of service performance, and engagement with consumers and carers.

Ambulance service organisations provide data on demand and performance. They ensure it is reliable and accessible to enable robust evaluation of their performance. Performance data is reported publicly.

Ambulance service organisations collect consumer and carer satisfaction information based on patient-reported experience and outcomes, including both consumer complaints and positive feedback. This information is regularly communicated by ambulance service organisations to the Department of Health.

Ambulance service organisations advise consumers of fees, concession entitlements, debt-recovery practices and hardship payment options. This information must be provided clearly and in a timely and transparent manner.

Ambulance service organisations must make public their corporate governance structures. It must be in a form that is readily accessible to the Western Australian community.

All clinical prioritisation decisions and allocation of ambulance capability decisions are capable of quality review.

## 7. Sustainability

The Western Australian ambulance system is sustainable, meaning that there is capacity to provide ambulance services into the future by:

- responding to the emerging needs of the community, including vulnerable cohorts
- delivering cost efficiency
- increasing depth and diversity in ambulance services provision
- minimising or eliminating damage to the environment.

Ambulance services are designed in consultation with consumers and carers.

Ambulance service organisations recognise the critical contribution that volunteers make to service sustainability and ensure that programs are in place to actively recruit volunteers.

Ambulance service organisations support student clinical placements and volunteer placements to facilitate training and work experience for emerging paramedic professionals.

Ambulance service organisations maintain and implement robust risk-based business continuity arrangements and implementation across diverse potential disruptions.

Ambulance service organisations develop innovative initiatives that respond to the emerging patient transport needs of the community and to contemporary models of care and/or pathways, based on research and high-quality data. This includes cross-sectoral partnership supporting delivery of the Western Australian Government's policy objectives.

Ambulance service organisations develop an environmental management system to monitor and improve environmentally sustainable practices, including implementing strategies for minimising or eliminating negative environmental impacts arising from emissions to air, land and water.

## 8. Equity of access and health outcomes

The Western Australian ambulance system continually strives to increase equity of access to ambulance services in Western Australia and equity of health outcomes.

Western Australian ambulance services organisations are committed to:

- reducing the inequity between provision of metropolitan and country ambulance services
- increasing equity of access and equity of health outcomes for people who experience barriers arising from socioeconomic factors or other patient specific disadvantages.

# Key terms

**Ambulance** means a vehicle, which may include an aircraft, that is specifically equipped to provide ambulance services and complies with relevant Australian standards and legislation.

**Ambulance services** means those services:

- relating to the work of rendering pre-hospital care to persons experiencing illness and/or injury: and/or
- the conveyance of those persons, by road or aeromedical transport: and
- comprising primary response or inter-hospital (planned) patient transport response.

**Ambulance service organisations** are the organisations that deliver ambulance services, including pre-hospital care, and transport services. The Western Australian Police Force is not an ambulance service organisation for the purpose of this Framework.

**Contracted health entity** has the meaning given in s.6 of the *Health Services Act 2016* and for the purpose of this Framework includes non-government ambulance service organisations providing ambulance services under a contract or other agreement entered into with the Department of Health CEO on behalf of the State, a health service provider, or the Minister for Health.

**Hospital** means all public hospitals, regional resources centres, integrated district health services and small hospitals/primary health care centres included in the Metropolitan and WACHS Hospital Services Matrices in the WA Health Clinical Services Framework 2014–2024. For the purpose of this Framework the definition may also include locations in the community, or private hospitals, in certain circumstances.

**Inter-hospital (planned) patient transport response** means how ambulance services are accessed to transport a person between hospitals. This may include providing a stage or leg of the transport between ambulance services. For the purpose of this Framework it also includes pre-booked medically necessary patient transport between a location in the community and a hospital, and transport of patients subject to transport orders or apprehension and return orders under the *Mental Health Act 2014*.

**Primary ambulance response** means how a person located in the community accesses ambulance services capability which may include transportation to a hospital.

**Western Australian ambulance system** refers to the system network that ensures coverage of ambulance services across Western Australia. The Western Australian ambulance system may comprise ambulance services provided by one or more ambulance service organisations. The system also includes communication and tasking of ambulance service capability to meet current and anticipated service delivery requirements. It may or may not provide a coordination service.

**Western Australian health system** has the meaning given in section 19(1) of the *Health Services Act 2016*.



# Exclusions

The following types of pre-hospital care and patient transport are excluded from this Framework, and are not included in the definition of ‘ambulance services’:

- private and public transport
- patient transport services provided by health service providers within hospital grounds
- patient transport services where no clinical care is required, including pre-booked transport services
- event first aid and medical services
- the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme
- patient transport that occurs outside the scope of the *Health Services Act 2016*.

Enquiries relating to this framework may be directed to:

**Title:** Executive Director, State Health Operations Centre  
**Division:** Clinical Excellence Division  
**Email:** [shoc.ced@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:shoc.ced@health.wa.gov.au)









This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

Produced by Public and Aboriginal Health Division  
© Department of Health 2021

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.