



Dear stakeholders,

Earlier this year, the Victorian Government announced the terms of reference for the review of Victoria's non-emergency patient transport (NEPT) services – a promise Victorians endorsed at November's election.

These wide-ranging terms of reference have enabled me as Review lead to take a comprehensive look at NEPT services to ensure they meet the needs of Victorians, both now and into the future. This includes considering procurement arrangements, timeliness of services, workforce, market fragmentation, financial sustainability and importantly how to connect Victorians to the right transport.

The Review has been guided by extensive research and comprehensive engagement with the sector and those who interact with it. I would like to take this opportunity to thank patients and carers, NEPT staff and providers, representatives of the Victorian public health system, industrial partners, peak bodies, and all other Victorians who made submissions, participated in roundtables, and otherwise contributed to this review. I would also like to acknowledge the expert support and professionalism of the Department of Health secretariat, and representatives of other jurisdictions who have generously shared local expertise and experience.

Throughout the review, I have found Victoria's NEPT services to have many strengths. It is clear that services are delivered by a skilled and dedicated workforce that is performing a vital role in ensuring community access to health care, supporting patient flow across the system and supporting Ambulance Victoria's emergency crews to respond to the most time critical patients. In addition, quality and safety appears to be strengthening since regulatory reforms were enacted in 2021.

Notwithstanding these strengths, I have also heard a consistent expectation that the system can and should do better. Patients expect more accessible, appropriate, and timely NEPT services, with an experience that is safe, comfortable, and caring. AV is seeking to optimise the role of NEPT in freeing up emergency ambulances, while hospitals are looking for a streamlined system that is more responsive to their needs, and which provides equitable access in rural areas. And NEPT staff have expressed a desire to have their skills fully utilised within their scope of practice and focussed on for those who genuinely need NEPT services, and to feel a sense of value from the system that is reflected in fair employment conditions as well as training and support.

It is clear there are challenges to address, including variable timeliness, fragmentation, and insecure work. In considering NEPT models in other jurisdictions, and lessons from other industries, I have found that these problems are not inevitable when services are outsourced. Experience elsewhere shows that both outsourcing and insourcing models can work well – or work poorly – depending on how they are set up.

As such, I have set out recommendations for improving the design of NEPT services that are agnostic of whether they are delivered by public or private entities. In line with the Review's terms of reference, I have also developed options for improving outsourcing, and for partially or fully insourcing services.

My final report will be provided to Government by the end of this year. Government will then take the time needed to fully consider the options and recommendations before communicating its decision. We appreciate the sector's patience while these important considerations are worked through.

NEPT is a critical feature of Victoria's health system, supporting more than 400,000 transports last year alone. It plays an important role in supporting timely patient access to health services and freeing up paramedics to respond to time-critical emergencies faster.

Because of this, it's imperative that services are operating as effectively as possible – and so it's been a privilege to lead this review of NEPT in Victoria. I believe this report will provide the Victorian Government with a strong foundation for planning and delivering NEPT services into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen McGhie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve McGhie MP
NEPT Review Lead