



# Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Wednesday, 17 July 2013

#### **BETTER PATIENT OUTCOMES UNDER HISTORIC AEROMEDICAL REFORMS**

Health Minister Jillian Skinner today announced major reforms to aeromedical services in NSW, which will see faster treatment times and better access to clinical support for patients across the state.

Mrs Skinner announced a number of enhancements to aeromedical services as part of the *Reform Plan for Aeromedical (Rotary Wing) Retrieval Services in NSW*.

“The NSW Government initiated an independent review into the state’s aeromedical services to ensure that patient needs are being met and taxpayers are getting value for money when it comes to these contracted services.

“Today I’m proud to release the NSW Government response to the independent review and public consultation, which is the second and final component of our Strategic Review of the Ambulance Service of NSW.

“This plan is a blueprint for the development of a new Helicopter Retrieval Network for NSW, which will deliver quality care and coverage for patients in metropolitan, rural, regional and remote NSW.

“The new Helicopter Retrieval Network will see patients moving from the air to hospital care faster than ever before,” Mrs Skinner said.

Highlights of the *Reform Plan for Aeromedical (Rotary Wing) Retrieval Services in NSW* include:

- For the first time in NSW, there will be a doctor and paramedic or doctor and nurse on every flight, from every base across the new Helicopter Retrieval Network;
- Patients will receive better and faster emergency care with bases operating 24/7 including Newcastle, Tamworth, Orange, Wollongong, Canberra and the Northern Region Helicopter Base, which will allow aircraft to respond to emergencies up to 30 minutes faster;
- The NSW Government has committed to employing 11.5 new Full Time Equivalent (FTE) retrieval doctors and 18 new FTE paramedics to enhance the new Helicopter Retrieval Network;
- This will be funded by a \$151.2 million commitment from the NSW Government, including an additional \$39.1 million in new funding over the next three years;

- For the first time ever, NGOs and commercial helicopter operators will be able to tender on a level playing field for government-funded helicopter contracts;
- The Reform Plan guarantees that the Helicopter Retrieval Network can meet the growing demand for retrieval missions in NSW, which is expected to increase by 23 per cent by 2022;
- The current fleet of helicopters will be streamlined, reducing the cost of maintenance, parts and training for each aircraft type, and will make crews more flexible to work across regional boundaries.

Mrs Skinner said she was proud to deliver today's reforms which will reshape the way aeromedical care is delivered in NSW.

"I have the utmost respect for our state's paramedics and the extraordinary work they do for patients across the state.

"Paramedics are at the very frontline of our emergency services and these reforms go a long way to supporting rather than stifling their abilities to retrieve and treat patients quickly."

NSW Ambulance Chief Executive Ray Creen welcomed the reforms to aeromedical services.

"NSW Ambulance has a proud tradition of delivering quality care to patients across the state and I am certain these reforms will enhance this service," Mr Creen said.

"These changes will see more paramedics in the air to retrieve patients faster while being supported by doctors and nurses to deliver the highest quality emergency care to those who need it most."

The *Reform Plan for Aeromedical (Rotary Wing) Retrieval Services in NSW* can be viewed at:

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/about/nswhealth/pages/new\\_helicopter\\_network.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/about/nswhealth/pages/new_helicopter_network.aspx)