

**Tony Ryall**

4 June, 2009

## **Speech to announce New Zealand Ambulance Sector Strategy 2009**

Thank you for your welcome to the St John Northern Region Headquarters.

St John has been an important part of New Zealand's communities for the past 124 years. This makes you one of the longest standing community organisations in the country.

While St John delivers a wide portfolio of activities, you are best known for providing the majority of New Zealand's ambulance services.

As you know, ACC and the Ministry of Health created a joint operating team to address the sector representing both agencies, and that group will work with the ambulance sector to action the initiatives I am announcing today.

Government is committed to supporting the ambulance sector and I am pleased, even in these difficult times, to be able to tell you that additional resources are being put into the critical front-line ambulance service that is important to all Kiwis.

The previous Government gave a commitment to increase the ambulance funding baseline by an additional \$10million, and, through Budget 2009 an additional \$2million will be added. This will provide the ambulance sector with an additional \$12million dollars over the next four years.

On behalf of my colleague ACC Associate Minister Pansy Wong, and myself, I am pleased to advise that through this additional funding, government will fund 100 new paramedic positions to support the sector's ability to respond to medical emergencies.

The need for 100 new ambulance officers was highlighted as a key priority following intensive consultation with the health sector and the public.

Increasing the proportion of ambulances that have two crew members was also identified as an important objective and funding is being made available to support rural volunteers to receive training. This initiative will support 250 volunteers an annual basis.

Government will require registration of paramedics as health professionals, and will provide funding to support the start up costs for this.

More government funding will also be available for the air ambulance sector to address funding shortfalls in the current economic climate.

These initiatives emerged from consultation on the New Zealand Ambulance Service Strategy, which identified goals for the sector for 2010 and action steps to be completed over time to achieve those goals. The strategy is also being released today, and has been posted on the National Ambulance Sector Office website.

I would like to thank you for your preparedness in relation to the swine 'flu outbreak. Our ability to quickly react to the outbreak was due to all agencies working together to activate the New Zealand national Influenza Pandemic Action Plan and to weave in their own agency plan.