Question on Notice
No. 347
Asked on 7 March 2007]

MR WENDT asked the Minister for Emergency Services (MR PURCELL) -

QUESTION:

Will he advise the advantages of the new Emergency Services Computer-Aided Dispatch (ESCAD) system and what benefits will flow to Queenslanders?

ANSWER:

The Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch (ESCAD) project has been developed to replace three existing Computer Aided Dispatch systems. The implementation of a new common Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch system will make a positive difference to frontline service delivery through reductions in processing time and faster responses. The system will improve operations and support between regions and provide greater redundancy and efficiencies across the regions, especially during large scale incidents.

Currently, a number of different systems are used for Computer Aided Dispatch. Benefits of this new system will include one system shared between the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service instead of the existing three Computer Aided Dispatch systems. The implementation of one system will result in seamless connectivity and operations between all regions, a reduction in the need to train staff on different Computer Aided Dispatch systems enabling staff to be positioned in different roles more easily; and more effective and efficient resource allocation.

The proposed single system allows for automatic case creation between agencies, for example, a case created by the Queensland Ambulance Service regarding a road traffic crash with trapped patients will automatically create the same case for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to advise the dispatcher to respond fire appliances. This method of case creation between agencies will lead to less processing time and faster response/s.

Ultimately, the new Computer Aided Dispatch system will interface to the electronic Ambulance Report Form (eARF). eARFs are currently being introduced state-wide for use by on-road Officers to record patient details and vital signs. This initiative replaces the current 'paperwork' completed by Officers. The tablets will receive case details directly from the Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch system and the officers will enter patient details directly into the tablet leading to improved case processing time.

The system will also be able to be interfaced with Queensland Health systems to improve early notification of incoming patients.

Dynamic resourcing from different areas/regions can also be dispatched across boundaries if deemed appropriate therefore achieving more effective and efficient service delivery

VisiCAD is a system which is utilised in a number of agencies throughout USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Agencies currently live on VisiCAD 4.3 (the version DES is planning to implement) include Charleston County EMS, San Diego Fire, San Luis Obispo, Minneapolis and Dallas. In Australasia, NSW Ambulance and St John's Ambulance New Zealand are currently using an earlier version of VisiCAD. As part of the project development, the system has been tested in a non-live environment within a laboratory facility by operational representatives.

The ESCAD system is planned for state-wide implementation in the latter part of this calendar year.