

Shire of Yalgoo
37 Gibbons St
Yalgoo WA 6635
Ph: (08) 9962 8042
Fax: (08) 9962 8020
pa@yalgoo.wa.gov.au
www.yalgoo.wa.gov.au



Call for a Rescue Helicopter to be based in the Mid West

On Saturday evening a tragic accident occurred on the Geraldton-Mt Magnet Highway 40km away from the small town of Yalgoo. This motor vehicle accident took the lives of 3 people, injured 3 more and will have a lasting effect on a much wider community. The Shire of Yalgoo expresses our deepest sympathies to the families involved and anyone else affected.

The community is thankful for the career first responders in the wider region who go above and beyond while being consistently understaffed or restrained by resources. Immense gratitude is also extended to volunteer and bystander assistance.

While it does not have to be the reality, as evidenced in other states and the metropolitan area, the majority of first responders on this night were volunteers. Anything that provides support or a safety net for patients and volunteers should be given the utmost priority.

Earlier this year the State Government rejected calls for an Emergency Rescue Helicopter to be based in Geraldton or the wider Mid West. It is currently more of a priority to provide coverage in areas that are a 10min drive from a regional or primary hospital, rather than areas with shrinking medical services and long travel distances.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-23/northern-wa-rescue-chopper-request-rejected/103500780>

The Royal Flying Doctor Service is an essential part of living in rural Western Australia. Their fixed wing fleet cannot however operate as flexibly as a rescue helicopter. On this night a plane with experienced medical staff was unable to land due to fog, turning a 100km ambulance trip into a 200km trip. If this was within 200km of Jandakot (soon to be expanded slightly to 300km with new purchases) a helicopter would have had the potential to land hours earlier directly at the scene. The Royal Flying Doctor Service is still significantly funded by donations at a time when billions of dollars of royalties are generated in the regions. These services are not just for people living in regional WA but anyone requiring hospitalisation whether they find themselves in Broome or Albany.

The Shire of Yalgoo is not a lone voice in the Mid West and Northern Midlands calling for a rescue helicopter to be based in the region.

The Murchison Country Zone of WALGA has strongly advocated this position along with surrounding Local Emergency Management Committees and Medical Services in the region.



While this is written from the perspective of someone who chooses to live in a remote area please think about this situation from the perspective of a farmer, tradesperson, mine worker, truck driver, family in a caravan or first nations Australian with a strong connection to remote locations. If you have ever set off along Brand Highway, Indian Ocean Dr or the North West Coastal Highway this is a situation you could find yourself in.

Please see attached correspondence from the Ministers for Emergency Services, Health and Mines and Petroleum supporting the status quo with regards to regional safety.

