



## AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF AMBULANCE PROFESSIONALS

---

*(formerly Institute of Ambulance Officers (Australia))*

**10<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

**To whom it may concern:**

**Re: Productivity Commission 2005, Australia's Health Workforce, Position Paper**

Please find a following response to the Draft Proposals re the above study from the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals.

**Regards**

**Les Hotchin  
National Secretary  
PO Box 345W  
Ballarat West VIC 3350  
Tel: 03 5331 9584  
Fax: 03 5333 2721  
Mob: 0417 336 490  
Email: [natsec@acap.org.au](mailto:natsec@acap.org.au)**

**Australian College of Ambulance Professionals**  
**Comments on Draft Proposals**  
**Productivity Commission Health Workforce Study**  
**10th November 2005**

**The Australian College of Ambulance Professionals**

The Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) is an interested party in the Australian Government “Productivity Commission Health Workforce Study” and would welcome the opportunity for consultation at each phase of the Study.

This submission presents the position of ACAP on the Draft Proposals as circulated.

ACAP was established in 1973 as the Institute of Ambulance Officers (Australia) and is the peak national body representing more than four thousand ambulance officers, paramedics and pre-hospital health practitioners across Australia.

The objectives of the College in relation to Professional Standards and Policies are listed in the ACAP Constitution and are as follows:

- To enhance the professional standards of education, training, continuing development and accreditation of its members.
- To maintain policies and practices which continually enhance the skills and professional performance of its members.
- To achieve the most effective, efficient and economic use of resources available for pre-hospital emergency patient care throughout Australia.
- To maintain the highest levels of integrity, ethical behaviour and compassion in the provision of patient care services by members at all times.
- To establish and enforce a Code of Professional Conduct which ensures full professional independence, objectivity, responsibility and accountability in all individual and collective ACAP activities.
- To foster wide understanding and acceptance of the high professional and ethical standards, commitment and performance of ACAP and its members.
- To establish and promote ACAP’s role as an accrediting professional body whose members have nationally registered qualifications and expertise in the provision of emergency ambulance and/or paramedic and/or pre-hospital services.

## **The Current Position Relating to Ambulance Practice**

Ambulance practice is currently regulated in each State and Territory by Acts of Parliament. Ambulance practitioners are licensed to practice by their respective State and Territory Ambulance Services. There are also a number of private Ambulance Service providers throughout Australia. Defence force paramedic personnel have recently taken a closer interest in the standards of education and qualification of their civilian counterparts.

The State and Territory agencies establish and govern the skills and knowledge required of the practitioner and the scope of practice. Ambulance practitioners are not enabled to practice outside the bounds of a State authorised agency. These agencies are also tasked with the provision of training and education as well as quality control and professional discipline of practitioners.

Drugs and Poisons Regulations, equipment and patient care technology relevant to ambulance practice differs between States and Territories and can have the effect of inhibiting, but not necessarily preventing mobility of ambulance practitioners between Services.

The Convention of Ambulance Authorities (CAA) intent is to establish common practices among ambulance authorities. There is a standard education curriculum set out in the “Health Services Training Package” (Vocational level qualifications). However this package allows sufficient leeway for there to be considerable variances in agreed practice between agencies to provide for geographic and demographic demand profiles. The ambulance component of the Health Training Package is currently under review. Some States have moved towards tertiary level qualifications.

Currently paramedic education is provided internally and through outsourced agencies, VET sector and university degree programs in line with the standard across the health industry for practitioners.

## **Comments on Draft Proposals**

### **Facilitating workplace innovation**

The College supports this proposal.

Ambulance paramedics operate across a diverse range of healthcare environments, including rural and remote areas.

All State and Territory ambulance authorities support the concept of “Evidenced-based Practice” and are moving to enhance their ability to meet this standard.

### **More responsive education and training arrangements**

The College agrees with this principle. Ambulance paramedics have much to offer the system.

The ambulance profession has been the only health service provider of an interventionalist nature yet to adopt degree-level qualifications for their emergency care practitioners. Some State authorities are now correcting this anomaly opening the opportunity for better synergies in the education and development of health care practitioners.

The College welcomes consultation on all matters pertaining to pre-hospital healthcare.

### **A consolidated national accreditation regime**

This proposal fits neatly with the overall concept of the provision of uniform standards and a national systematic framework. The objectives of the College align with this proposal and both ACAP and the CAA are working in collaboration to achieve these outcomes.

### **Supporting change to registration arrangements**

The lack of arrangements relating to professional registration frustrates the attainment of national recognition.

As the peak national body representing the profession, ACAP supports the active progression of registration on a national basis. The College is keen to pursue this matter and would be interested in participating in the development of any new approach.

### **Improving funding related incentives to workplace change**

Currently there are very limited avenues for federal funding incentives for paramedic practice.

State Ambulance Services provide a primary health service that could be further enhanced by access to federally funded incentives, including provision of rural and remote initiatives.

Whilst this proposal may relate directly to health services providers, ACAP supports any proposal that will directly improve services to the patient or health care clientele.

### **Better focused and more streamlined projections of future workforce requirements**

As health providers currently tend to operate in isolation of each other, the coordination of future workforce plans which better match demands, is essential if duplication of effort is to be avoided.

Current health planning appears to underestimate or ignore the role performed by ambulance paramedics, especially the importance of their role in the “Chain of Survival”, now and into the future.

### **More effective approaches to improving outcomes in rural and remote areas**

There are trends worldwide supporting the use of emergency care practitioners. In the future, ambulance paramedics could play a role particularly in rural and remote areas, where the Ambulance Service currently has a network of ambulance stations throughout Australia. The College could assist in facilitating an educational needs analysis to meet community requirements, ensuring that practical value is achieved for the rural communities of Australia.

### **Ensuring that the requirements of groups with special needs are met**

Ambulance paramedics are often the last resource that responds to community groups including those with special needs. The College is well placed to consider specific developments that may assist to develop an improved model of service delivery to these groups. The College and Ambulance Services throughout Australia are also acutely aware of the need to develop “culturally-sensitive” practitioners.

### **Concluding statement**

ACAP is certainly an interested and integral organization in the pre-hospital healthcare field and welcomes the current “Productivity Commission Health Workforce Study”.

The College would be happy to make available appropriate representatives to participate in consultative forums as requested by the Commission.