



National Professional Body Welcomes NSW Ambulance Report

The National President of the *Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP)* which represents the professional interests of Australian paramedics has welcomed the Final Report of the Inquiry into the Management and Operations of the NSW Ambulance Service.

The report was released by the Chair of the New South Wales Parliament's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 on Monday 20th October 2008.¹

Mr Patrick said that implementation of the Report's recommendations should enhance the quality of out of hospital emergency health care in both urban and rural regions, and contribute to greater community confidence in the standard of paramedic care in New South Wales.

A significant recommendation made by the Parliamentary Committee was the proposal for the registration of paramedics under the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) scheme for the regulation of health professionals.

He said that ACAP strongly supported the underlying purposes of health practitioner regulation, and it was an anomaly that paramedics had to date not been registered as health professionals, given that the everyday clinical practices of the profession and the administration of potentially dangerous medications and interventions pose exceptional risks to public health and safety.

Public safety was paramount and ACAP believed that paramedics should be nationally regulated under the COAG framework as an urgent priority.

The sustainability of Emergency Medical Services across Australia's rural and more remote areas was closely related to integrated workforce planning and issues such as accreditation, regulation and practitioner mobility. This was particularly important with a growing number of private EMS providers employing paramedics outside the ambit of the traditional ambulance sector.

The profession had raised the importance of appropriate health care regulatory regimes in its recent submission to the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and had strongly supported the COAG decision to introduce a national registration scheme for health practitioners and to implement a national course accreditation scheme.

Mr Patrick said that the Report had addressed many operational issues including the importance of including out of hospital Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as a key component of the health care system.

¹ <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/B719A16DF5B974EBCA2574E7007F68D4>

“Since Emergency Medical Services are essentially related to health outcomes, there are strong grounds for funding through the Australian Health Care Agreements” he said, “ In that respect it was disappointing that the Inquiry had not fully addressed the issues of funding and Commonwealth support in making its recommendations for the allocation of increased resources”.

Mr Patrick added that the present myriad of State-based funding arrangements needed review and there should be a nationally driven policy approach to the provision of EMS under consistent funding and administrative arrangements, with base funding provided by the Commonwealth.

In addition to more appropriate funding arrangements, the benefits of a national approach to out of hospital Emergency Medical Services included the adoption of :

- a nationally accepted and independent framework for the accreditation of EMS service providers (such as Ambulance Services);
- a nationally recognised and independent framework for community engagement and complaint mechanisms for service providers and paramedic practitioners; and
- a nationally recognised external accreditation system for paramedic education within the COAG framework.

It was to be hoped that in considering the Report, the Government would take such matters into account, so that New South Wales and Australia generally could benefit from the professional skills of a highly competent and ethical paramedic workforce.

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