

# Paramedics Perception of Frequent Users in Australian Ambulance Services



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## Background

- Frequent users of ambulance services have been a reported occurrence for some time yet there is still no formal definition or guideline within Australia.
- Characteristics and reason for calling have been researched to an extent
- There are no Australian studies looking at paramedic perceptions of frequent users, paramedic attitudes towards frequent users, or strategies Australian paramedics think would benefit this patient cohort

## Methods

Mixed method approach

Cross-sectional Quantitative Survey and Qualitative Interviews targeting Paramedics who were

- AHPRA registered
- Front line clinical role
- Working in an Australian Ambulance Service

The survey contained a mix of open ended, scenario based and binary questions

The questions in the semi-structured interview explored and expand on the themes and data received from the survey

## Interview Findings:

- 12 participants: 6 males, 5 female and 1 non-binary
- Representation from 5 Australian States (QLD, WA, Vic, SA, TAS)

### Major Emerging Themes:

**Frustration (With patients, the health system and organisations)**

**“but particularly at 2 o'clock on a night shift when you get a job and you see the pager that says you going to that address that you recognize. It's a lot of frustration and annoyance”**

**Complex patient cohort**

**“really complex comorbidities, complex histories, lots of medications, things like that”**

**Negative Ambulance Culture**

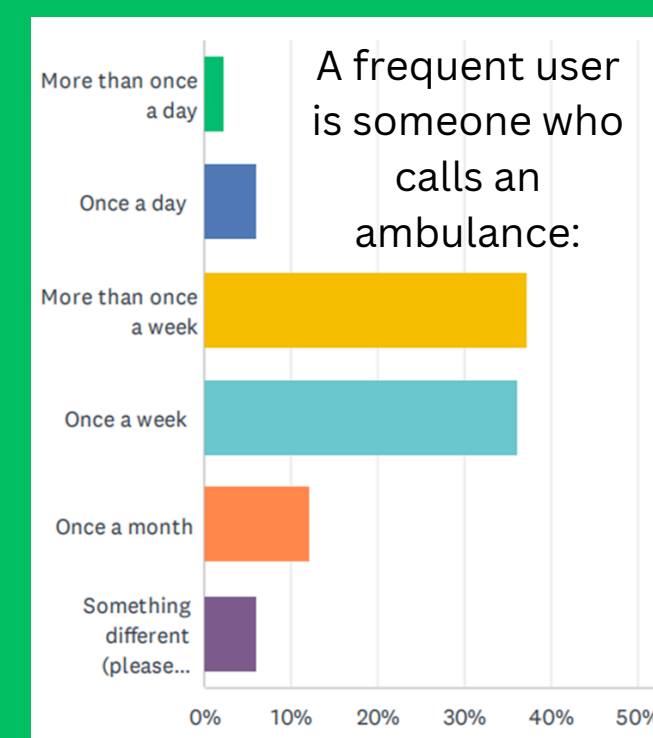
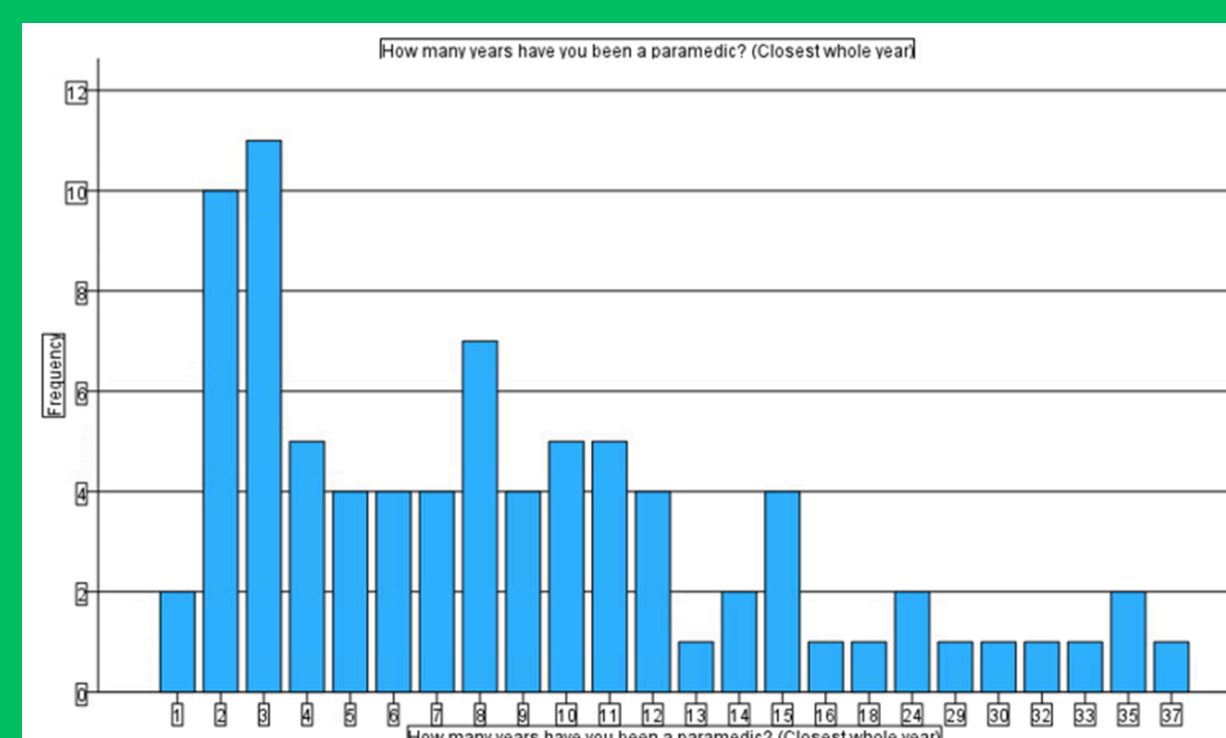
**“need somebody to advocate for them, and that I feel they potentially lose that because our frequent user there's the potential lack of empathy and compassion from some of our colleagues”**



## Survey Findings:

- 83 participants: 35 females, 46 males, 1 non-binary, 1 prefer not to say
- 83 participants: 61% major cities (250,000+ population) remainder outer regional, inner regional, rural and very rural
- Paramedic years of experience varied from 1-37 years with the majority being within the first ten years

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE
I believe frequent use of the ambulance service is associated with serious medical conditions.	48.19% 40	37.35% 31	14.46% 12
It is difficult for me to have compassion for patients who frequently use ambulance services.	25.30% 21	26.51% 22	48.19% 40
I believe that frequent users are able to reduce their use of the ambulance service if they were motivated to do so.	10.84% 9	22.89% 19	66.27% 55
I believe I can correctly assess the needs of patients who frequent the ambulance service.	16.87% 14	27.71% 23	55.42% 46
I believe I am equipped in my service to manage frequent users appropriately, e.g. referral pathways.	73.49% 61	12.05% 10	14.46% 12
I believe that frequent users is a complex cohort that cannot be managed by ambulance services alone.	2.41% 2	7.23% 6	90.36% 75
I believe that frequent users would call less if they had basic needs, such as housing, met.	20.48% 17	19.28% 16	60.24% 50
I react negatively to attending a frequent user.	24.10% 20	38.55% 32	37.35% 31



## References

