



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Thursday 12 May 2022**

### **“I’m scared for the community”: Australasian College of Paramedicine Chair calls for expanded roles for paramedics led by Commonwealth Chief Paramedic Officer to address ramping and hospital crisis**

The Chair of the Australasian College of Paramedicine is renewing calls for the establishment of a Commonwealth Chief Paramedic Officer and for the government to pilot community paramedicine models as practical solutions for ambulance ramping and the staffing and capacity crisis facing Australia’s health system.

In an interview with [The Project](#) on Wednesday night, College Chair Ryan Lovett said: “Ambulance ramping is the inability of paramedics to hand over care of their patient at hospital emergency departments,” Mr Lovett said. “Prior to COVID, we saw double-digit increases in demand on ambulance services around the country. What we see now, as communities open back up, is that ramping’s picked up exactly where it left off. Just increasing demand and investment not keeping up with demand in ambulance services and in hospitals and in primary care.

“I’m scared. I’m scared for the community. What happens when the weather cools down and we see the demand on ambulance services increase and we see the demand on emergency departments increase? It’s a really frightening scenario.”

Vice President of the Australian Medical Association Dr Chris Moy stressed that the healthcare worker shortage was one of the main reasons for the increase in ambulance ramping, highlighting an urgent need for the training and recruitment of healthcare professionals across the country to meet patient care needs and reduce the strain on hospitals. “The problem is our hospitals are full, absolutely log jammed up ... in a dangerous way. There are not enough beds, not enough doctors, there’s not enough nurses,” he said.

Paramedicine has the potential to address both the systemic challenges and the health sector workforce shortages by capitalising on the broader role paramedics can play in community healthcare beyond traditional ambulance-based duties. The appointment of a Commonwealth Chief Paramedic Officer is a much-needed step in realising this potential, providing leadership and oversight, and ensuring the profession has a seat at the table representing paramedics. At present, the Victorian Government is the only jurisdiction in Australia that has a Chief Paramedic Officer specifically charged with providing oversight of the out-of-hospital care sector and advice related to the professional discipline of paramedicine.

The absence of a Commonwealth Chief Paramedic Officer means that the paramedic profession is absent from this high-level professional leadership. This highlights a lack of representation, perspective, and consideration regarding quality and safety matters related to paramedicine at the highest level.

“Paramedics are part of the solution, and it is imperative that they are recognised as such and are funded accordingly,” Mr Lovett said.

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