



Australasian College of Paramedicine

Prebudget Submission

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About the College

Advancing paramedicine

The Australasian College of Paramedicine (the College) is the peak professional body representing and supporting paramedics and student paramedics across Australasia since 1973. The College champions the unique capabilities of paramedics in emergency, urgent and primary care, driving a connected and multidisciplinary approach to high-quality healthcare in all communities.

The College is future-focused and committed to enhancing person-centred care through sustainable initiatives, sound policy and legislation, evidence-based research findings, and models of care that utilise and support paramedics to work to their optimal capabilities driving professional growth and opportunity.

Not only is paramedicine one of the most trusted health professions, but it is also the fastest growing health profession year on year.¹ Now is the time to lay the foundations for the generations to come. Paramedics are integral to the future success of the Australian health system and, as the peak representational body, we advocate for professional recognition and support.

Collaboration: Together we improve person-centred care

The College has served the paramedic profession across Australasia throughout its 50-year history, and has developed strong working relationships across jurisdictions, with the Ahpra Paramedicine Board of Australia, the Council of Ambulance Authorities, the Australasian Council of Paramedicine Deans, government health departments, universities delivering paramedicine courses, other health profession colleges, and private healthcare providers.

At present, the College is partnering with several tertiary institutes on the landmark first Australasian Paramedicine Workforce Survey,² which is now in its second year, has received grant funding from the Department of Health Digital Health Agency to better understand the digital landscape, and is involved in several pilot initiatives that see paramedics engaged in team-based models of healthcare in hospital and primary care settings.

Acknowledgement

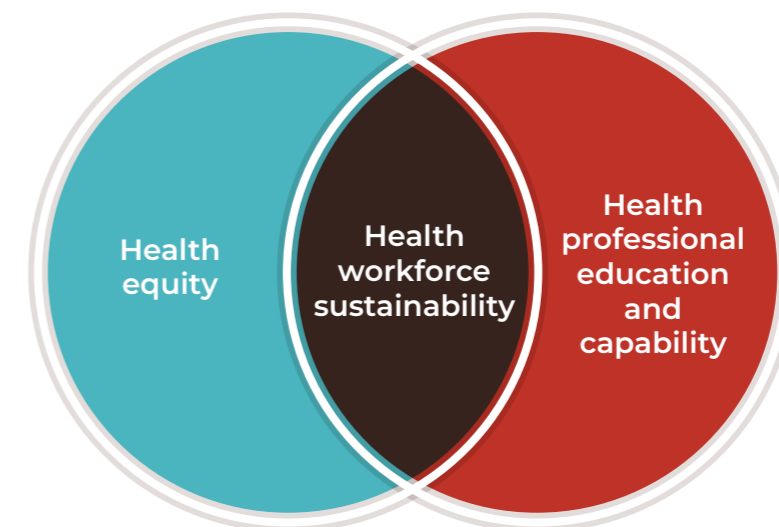
The College acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land and sea in which we live and work. We recognise their continuing connection to land, sea and culture, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

The College acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua and Treaty of Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Executive summary

Investing in Australia's health, and health practitioners

All Australians should be afforded the opportunity to achieve their best health. The College has identified a range of high-impact initiatives that support an equitable and sustainable long-term vision for improved healthcare across Australia. Central to this vision are three interconnected pillars: Health equity, health workforce sustainability, and health professional education and capability.



As the peak body representing and supporting paramedicine, we see our role in improving healthcare equity as being achieved through workforce sustainability initiatives and education programs. While workforce sustainability requires a rethink on many fronts, immediate actionable opportunities include: The development of standards for paramedicine; funding schemes and grants that support health reform and the inclusion of paramedicine in the health system; and educational and capability development that harnesses paramedics' capabilities for broader system-wide integration and utilisation. By investing in the initiatives we are proposing, we believe that we can work to mitigate workforce burnout, improve job satisfaction, create career opportunities, and enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare delivery.

While we applaud the government for its commitment to addressing the healthcare challenges, we see opportunities for Commonwealth funding which will ensure Australians receive the care they need, now and into the future.

Our proposals seek to build a resilient, compassionate and integrated healthcare system that supports a sustainable paramedic workforce while also improving what matters: Health equity for all Australians.

Proposal 1

Standards for paramedicine

A proposal that supports national standardisation of paramedicine for the purpose of utilising paramedics in primary and urgent care.

Problem statement

The increasing demand for healthcare services in primary and urgent care settings has highlighted the vital role of paramedics in delivering timely and effective healthcare interventions for chronic and complex conditions. Recent reports, including the Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce: Scope of Practice Review,³ PRIM-HS,⁴ and the Ngayabah Gadan Consensus Statement,⁵ highlight paramedics as an underutilised health workforce. Countless healthcare services, particularly in rural and remote areas where workforce challenges are at crisis levels, are seeking guidance from the College regarding paramedic standards beyond traditional ambulance services. These healthcare services require our support to safely integrate paramedics into their clinics.

The College has initiated the development of standards for paramedics in these settings. The scale of this task necessitates government funding similar to the support afforded to other health professionals, to ensure the effective utilisation of paramedics and the achievement of government objectives. Therefore, we urge the Australian Government to invest in the College to lead and establish standards for paramedicine to support primary and urgent care services and providers.

Project investment and linkages

Project investment:

Standards establishment phase, \$1.08m over three years

Healthcare system need:

Urgent. Outside of professional standards set by the Paramedicine Board of Australia, there are no standards for paramedics

Impact:

Empower healthcare providers to better understand paramedic capabilities and to confidently, and appropriately, utilise the paramedic workforce across primary and urgent care

Government alignment:

This proposal supports the government's healthcare initiatives related to multidisciplinary team-based models of care in primary and urgent care settings

The need for standards

Consistent across all reports, policies and conversations is the need for decision-makers and health service providers to have a better understanding of paramedics' skills and capabilities to enable them to build successful and sustainable multidisciplinary teams.^{3,6}

Health standards ensure consistent and effective healthcare delivery across regions, maintaining high-quality care and reducing disparities. Standards set benchmarks for the safety and quality of medical procedures, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare products, minimising risks and ensuring safe, effective care. Health standards also provide a framework for healthcare providers and facilities, ensuring they meet required qualifications and adhere to best practices. When enforced, these standards build public confidence and trust in the healthcare system.

To address this need, it is imperative that the College establish national paramedicine standards. Standards for paramedicine will optimise workforce and resource utilisation, support practices and practitioners, and ultimately improve patient safety, experience and health outcomes.



Key issues this proposal will address:

- **Fragmented care delivery:** The lack of nationalised standards for paramedics will further contribute to fragmented healthcare delivery, which impacts the overall quality of care.
- **Resource utilisation:** Inefficient use of paramedic resources due to unclear standards may lead to either underutilisation or overburdening paramedics and other health professionals, impacting overall health system efficiency.
- **Health literacy:** Decision-makers will be informed of paramedics' capabilities in primary and urgent care settings and expected standards beyond ambulance service providers.
- **Interprofessional practice:** Decision-makers and practice managers will be able to design best practice multidisciplinary teams inclusive of paramedics.
- **Person-centred care:** Standards will ensure best practice person-centred care.

Why the College?

The College is the peak body for paramedicine in Australasia and is best placed to identify, develop and implement standards for paramedicine in partnership with key stakeholders from clinical and tertiary settings, other health professional peak bodies, and contractors (consultants/agencies).

The College has begun consultation on standards development and has drafted a governance framework and policy documentation to develop standards for the profession, with additional Commonwealth funding required to establish standards.

The College is seeking Commonwealth funding on this vital project as standards will greatly impact paramedic workforce utilisation across Australia.

Proposal 2 Investing in interprofessional excellence

A proposal that supports professional bodies to ensure collaborative interprofessional excellence.

Problem statement

The *Scope of Practice Review Report* assessed the capabilities of primary health professions and provided an implementation roadmap, including various recommendations for interprofessional collaboration initiatives. To act on these short- and medium-term recommendations, professional organisations across Australia, such as the College, will need Commonwealth funding to ensure their respective professions are well-represented and consulted during any reform or co-design efforts.

Without Commonwealth financial support to act on these recommendations, smaller professions are unlikely to have the resourcing to contribute at the detailed level required for health system reform. For paramedicine, the profession will continue to fill healthcare gaps on an ad hoc basis, which is an ineffective use of this highly skilled health profession.

For best-practice utilisation of the profession beyond traditional ambulance response, where paramedics are supported to provide "top of scope" care in accordance with their capabilities and registration, they must be represented in all interprofessional discussions, taskforces, reference groups, consultations, and reviews. To achieve this, a Commonwealth health reform funding scheme must be established. We must unite expertise to unlock potential to meet the Government's promise to Australians.

Project investment and linkages

Project investment:

The College proposes the establishment of a Commonwealth health reform funding scheme from which peak bodies can exclusively apply for funding to support professional representation required for Australian health reform

Healthcare system need:

Vital. Without meaningful cross-professional consultation and reform, the system will be slow to change impacting community health

Impact:

Bringing to bear the expertise and knowledge of health's peak bodies, especially the smaller ones, will greatly enhance the health reform agenda of the Government

Government alignment:

The Scope of Practice Review Report



The need for an interprofessional funding mechanism

For many professional organisations such as the College, involvement in major projects designed to improve workforce utilisation and interprofessional and multidisciplinary collaboration requires significant expenditure from limited resources.

For paramedics, who are tertiary educated and regulated healthcare generalists, it is imperative that the College has involvement in interprofessional projects, advocating for the profession's effective utilisation.

To achieve this, the College needs access to a Commonwealth funding scheme that will allow it to engage additional staff to complete work such as project management, legislative and policy review, education and training design and development.

This proposal will address:

- The successful delivery of several items listed in the implementation roadmap (*Scope of Practice Report*).
- Potential lack of representation from paramedicine and other allied health professions in developing and designing interprofessional recommendations due to limited resources of peak bodies.

Proposal 3 Multiprofessional rural health grants

A proposal that supports health practitioners in rural settings to ensure optimal provision of person-centered care.

Problem statement

Australia's regional, rural and remote communities are home to 7 million people, representing approximately one-third of the Australian population.⁷ Yet these regions remain chronically under serviced by healthcare professionals, with only 13% of the national health and medical workforce providing care for these communities.⁸ As a result, they frequently experience significantly poorer health outcomes compared to metropolitan areas, highlighting the urgent need to build and sustain a highly skilled, fit-for-purpose, rural and remote healthcare workforce.

To address this, many rural and remote communities have embraced a collaborative, multidisciplinary team-based approach to healthcare, including paramedics, working to their full scope of practice.^{4,5} Indeed, recent reports all emphasise the critical need to prioritise and grow the service capacity of multidisciplinary teams to meet the healthcare needs of at-risk communities.^{3,5,6,9,10} These reports advocate for targeted placement and training opportunities that enhance interprofessional collaboration and skill development within healthcare teams.

Despite these recommendations, funding to promote the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals to rural and remote communities remains scarce, and for paramedics, virtually non-existent. The College calls on the Australian Government to invest in funding and incentive programs for paramedics and healthcare professionals, to enhance team-based care and the delivery of essential services in primary and urgent care, First Nations' health, aged care, disability care, and mental health across rural and remote communities.

Project investment and linkages

Project investment:

Funding support and incentive programs to recruit and retain paramedics and healthcare professionals delivering team-based healthcare in rural and remote communities

Healthcare system need:

Critical. Paramedics are uniquely placed to improve the provision of healthcare in remote communities

Impact:

Investing in paramedics and health professionals in rural and remote Australian communities will strengthen workforce recruitment and retention, leading to substantial improvements in patient care and health outcomes

Government alignment:

Scope of Practice Review, Health of the Nation, and A New Medicare: Grattan Report

“THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING MEDICARE AND ROLLING OUT IMPORTANT HEALTH REFORMS TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE LIVING OUTSIDE OF OUR CITIES.

EMMA MCBRIDE, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and for Rural and Regional Health, sent National Rural Health Commissioner Jenny May AM the Statement of Expectations for the period 2 September 2024 to 30 June 2026



Key issues this proposal will address:

• Rural health workforce crisis:

Similar to GPs and other allied health professions, the majority of paramedics (58%) are concentrated in major metropolitan regions,² leaving rural and remote communities severely underserved. Investing in funding and incentive programs for the placement and training of paramedics and other healthcare professionals will directly address the rural healthcare crisis, driving recruitment and retention in these communities, and improving health outcomes.

• Health literacy:

Multidisciplinary teams are crucial in addressing the national healthcare crisis, yet a lack of awareness about the skills, knowledge and competencies of healthcare professionals within these teams remains a significant barrier to their effective implementation. Investing in paramedics and healthcare professionals in these regions offers a unique opportunity to develop and grow the service capacity of team-based healthcare programs.

• Interprofessional collaboration:

Enhancing interprofessional collaboration is at the heart of developing the skills necessary for successful multidisciplinary healthcare teams. Investing in funding and incentive programs for all rural and remote healthcare workers, and not just GPs,¹¹ will support this collaboration, promoting unity rather than competition among healthcare providers. Enabling teams to work together will reduce siloing and fragmentation of care, leading to more cohesive, holistic and effective healthcare for at risk communities.

Proposal 4 **Prac payment program for paramedics**

A proposal for Commonwealth support of paramedic students experiencing “placement poverty” throughout their clinical placements.

Problem statement

Clinical placements are a mandatory requirement of paramedicine degrees, and paramedicine students experience “placement poverty” in the same manner as their nursing and midwifery peers. Paramedicine students complete up to 18 weeks of placement, which can be located hundreds of kilometres from their homes, causing extreme financial hardship as students seek accommodation, juggle paid jobs and rent/mortgage commitments and other family responsibilities.

Students are not immune to the cost-of-living pressures, and paramedicine students receive very little support via bursaries or grants compared with other student cohorts. Paramedic students need the same support as their nursing and midwifery counterparts. Most paramedic programs already require paramedic students to compete with nursing and midwifery students for tertiary institution support, and this payment initiative compounds the inequity experienced by paramedicine students.

The Australian Government’s Education Department announced it would invest \$427.4 million from 2024-25 to 2027-28 to introduce a new Commonwealth Prac Payment (Payment) from 1 July 2025 to support eligible teaching, nursing and midwifery, and social work students in higher education and VET in completing their placements.¹² Paramedic students were excluded.

Project investment and linkages

Project investment:

We recommend including paramedic students in the Commonwealth Prac Payments program funding support. This would likely see support for approximately 1,000 paramedics per year

Healthcare system need:

Critical. Health professional favouritism must end. It’s time to support paramedic students.

Impact:

The paramedicine profession has seen continual year-on-year growth.¹

Invest in this profession now to build a future workforce.

Government alignment:

Commonwealth Prac Payment.¹²

Key issues this proposal will address:

• Placement poverty:

This will provide some financial support for paramedic students facing “placement poverty”.¹³⁻¹⁵

• Reshaping healthcare culture by supporting multidisciplinary health teams:

Including paramedicine in the Commonwealth Prac Payment will support a sustainable healthcare workforce. AIHW data indicates that paramedicine is the fastest growing health profession.¹

• Governmental leadership and collaboration:

Australian health strategies and reports identify interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary team care as a solution in addressing the major healthcare access issues gripping Australia. Recognising paramedic students as part of this payment will show leadership and alignment with national healthcare reform.

The College recommends that the Department of Education collaborates with universities to establish, promote and encourage paramedicine students to apply for the payment.

This proposal is endorsed by:



Australasian Council of Paramedicine Deans



University of Tasmania



School of Health & Medical Sciences, UniSQ



University Central Queensland



Monash University



Charles Sturt University



Australian Catholic University



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