

Editorial

Consultation, cooperation and collaboration – the emergence of the Australasian Council of Paramedicine Deans

Paul Simpson PhD, MScM(ClinEpi), GCCLinEd, GCPaedS, BEd, BHSc(PrehospCare), AdvDipParaScience, is an intensive care paramedic, Senior Lecturer and Director of Academic Program (Paramedicine)¹

Affiliation:

¹School of Science and Health, Western Sydney University, New South Wales

<https://doi.org/10.33151/ajp.16.749>

In 1998 the first Australasian on-campus undergraduate paramedicine tertiary education degree commenced at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, New South Wales (1). Now, as we celebrate a quarter of a century of university-based paramedicine education, the sector now sees 17 universities offering entry-to-practice degree programs (2).

Throughout these 25 years, many significant milestones have been achieved within the paramedicine tertiary education sector. Most notable was the endorsement of university-based entry-to-practice training by the ambulance service industry leading to the current state of play in which all state and territory ambulance services, with the exception of New South Wales, mandating entry via a tertiary education provider.

In March 2019, the paramedicine tertiary education sector reached another important milestone with the emergence of the Australasian Council of Paramedicine Deans (www.paramedicinedeans.com). The Council is a collaborative group representing the interests of the paramedicine tertiary education sector and the discipline more broadly. In what is a clear demonstration of the increasing maturity of the sector, the Council received the unanimous support from the Vice Chancellors and paramedicine leads of all 17 universities offering paramedicine degree programs. Council membership is restricted to university programs identified as 'recognised approved programs' by the Paramedicine Board of Australia or, in the case of New Zealand programs, accredited by the Council of Ambulance Authorities. Each university delegates its academic lead to represent their program on the Council.

The Council's purpose is to:

- Develop and communicate to nominated stakeholders;
- Advance and promote tertiary education and research in the discipline of paramedicine;
- Advocate best practice in paramedicine tertiary education through consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders and members;
- Collaborate and consult with industry to evolve the discipline of paramedicine; and
- Advocate for improved patient care through the provision of evidence-based paramedicine education.

Generally, Councils of Deans are an established and well-evolved concept in most health care disciplines and have grown to become critical professional bodies that balance and complement industry groups and regulatory boards. The emergence of the Australasian Council of Paramedicine Deans aligns the paramedicine higher education service neatly with its neighbouring academic disciplines, and in many ways represents the final piece in the professional governance puzzle within the industry.

The potential benefits arising from the emergence of the Council are many. For example, the formation of the Council denotes the first time that all university programs have come together as a unified group, providing a platform for enhanced collaboration, cooperation, communication and consultation.

With the commencement of national registration via the Paramedicine Board of Australia in December 2018, paramedicine has entered an exciting period of dynamic change and evolution (3). Within tertiary education, there are many challenges facing the sector including paramedicine academic and student wellness and resilience (4,5); sustainability of the paramedic academic workforce (6-8); research capacity-building and agenda-setting (9); an increasingly overloaded clinical placement platform; newly created Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency accreditation standards (10); and rapidly evolving models of clinical care and scope of practice that are testing the nimbleness of undergraduate curricula to respond and adapt.

The Australasian Council of Paramedicine Deans will play an active role not only in responding to these challenges, but in collaboratively and co-operatively working with our partners, stakeholders and community to support and lead the discipline of paramedicine into a bright and prosperous future.

Dr Paul Simpson
Western Sydney University, New South Wales

References

1. Lord B. The development of a degree qualification for paramedics at Charles Sturt University. *Australasian Journal of Paramedicine* 2003;1(1).
2. Council of Ambulance Authorities. Paramedic Education - accredited courses 2019. Available at: www.caa.net.au/paramedic-education
3. Gough S. Welcoming paramedics into the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. *Australasian Journal of Paramedicine* 2018;15(4).
4. Watts J, Robertson N. Burnout in university teaching staff: a systematic literature review. *Educ Res* 2011;53:33-50.
5. Kinman G. Effort-reward imbalance and overcommitment in UK academics: implications for mental health, satisfaction and retention. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 2016;38:504-18.
6. O'Meara P, Maguire B. Developing a sustainable academic workforce in paramedicine. *Australian Universities' Review* 2018;60:54-6.
7. Munro GG, O'Meara P, Mathisen B. Paramedic academics in Australia and New Zealand: the 'no man's land' of professional identity. *Nurse Educ Pract* 2018;33:33-6.
8. O'Meara P. Searching for paramedic academics: vital for our future, but nowhere to be seen! *Australasian Journal of Paramedicine* 2015;12(4).
9. O'Meara P, Maguire B, Jennings P, Simpson P. Building an Australasian paramedicine research agenda: a narrative review. *Health Res Policy Syst* 2015;13:79.
10. Paramedicine Board of Australia. Education 2019. Available at: www.paramedicineboard.gov.au/Education.aspx