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## Submission to the Review of Health Practitioner Regulation in Victoria

ACAP Standards Committee  
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## **PROFESSIONALISM**

### **SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION IN VICTORIA BY THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF AMBULANCE PROFESSIONALS**

Article No. 990061

**ACAP Standards Committee**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) is an interested party in the process of review and reform of the health practitioner regulation in Victoria. This submission presents the position of ACAP on the issue of registration of ambulance professionals in ensuring improved protection to the community and improved public confidence. This paper will cover the following issues:

- The Australian College of Ambulance Professionals
- The current position relating to ambulance practice
- The ACAP position on registration of ambulance practitioners
- The current voluntary system of National Professional Recognition.
- Recommendations

#### **2.0 The Australian College of Ambulance Professionals**

ACAP was established in 1973 as the Institute of Ambulance Officers (Australia) and is the peak national body representing ambulance professionals.

The objectives of ACAP are varied and can be viewed in the Constitution. The specific objectives relating to registration are shown in table one:

**5.2. Professional Standards and Policies**

**5.2.1.** To enhance the professional standards of education, training, continuing development and accreditation of its members.

**5.2.2.** To maintain policies and practices which continually enhance the skills and professional performance of its members.

**5.2.3.** To achieve the most effective, efficient and economic use of resources available for pre-hospital emergency patient care throughout Australia.

**5.3. Code of conduct**

**5.3.1.** To maintain the highest levels of integrity, ethical behaviour and compassion in the provision of patient care services by members at all times.

**5.3.2.** To establish and enforce a Code of Professional Conduct which ensures full professional independence, objectivity, responsibility and accountability in all individual and collective ACAP activities.

**5.5. Professional Recognition**

**5.5.1.** To foster wide understanding and acceptance of the high professional and ethical standards, commitment and performance of ACAP and its members.

**5.5.2.** To establish and promote ACAP's role as an accrediting professional body whose members have nationally registered qualifications and expertise in the provision of emergency ambulance and/or paramedic and/or pre-hospital services.

**Table 1.** The ACAP Objectives relating to registration. "Constitution of the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals" available at <http://www.acap.org.au/national/constitution/constitution.htm>

**3.0 The Current Position Relating to Ambulance Practice**

Ambulance practice is currently regulated in each State and Territory by Acts of Parliament. Ambulance practitioners are licensed to practice by their employing agency. This agency establishes and governs the skills and knowledge required of the practitioner and also establishes the limits to which they will practice. Ambulance practitioners are not enabled to practice outside the bounds of a State authorised agency.

These agencies are also tasked with the provision of training and education as well as quality control and professional discipline of practitioners. The Convention of Ambulance Authorities (CAA) intent is to establish common practices among ambulance authorities. There is a standard education curriculum set out in the "Health Services Training Package". However this package allows sufficient leeway for there to be considerable variances in agreed practice between agencies to provide for geographic and demographic demand profiles.

**4.0 The ACAP position on registration of ambulance practitioners.**

The ACAP Constitution supports the active progression of registration by the College and a number of position papers have been produced. These papers set out a series of challenges offered to ACAP in progressing a program of registration. They also offer some guidelines for meeting these challenges.

ACAP as the peak national body representing the profession, is uniquely positioned to offer a system of State or National regulation.

Author(s): ACAP Standards Committee

## **5.0 The current voluntary system of National Professional Recognition.**

ACAP has established a voluntary National Professional Recognition (NPR) program.

(Refer ACAP website at [www.acap.org.au](http://www.acap.org.au)) This program is designed to achieve the following goals.

*The primary aims of the “Certified Ambulance Professional” (CAP) program are:*

- 1. To provide a quality assurance contribution to ambulance patient care and ambulance services in Australia by encouraging ambulance personnel to manage, and take responsibility for their own individual knowledge and competency.*
- 2. To facilitate national professional recognition for ambulance professionals who are certified for their ambulance practice by a State/Territory ambulance authority, and enhance portability of ambulance qualifications between States and Territories and between public and private Ambulance Services.*

This program was designed in consultation with the CAA and has been endorsed by a number of State authorities. As can be seen from the published aims of this program, the key outcomes through quality assurance, and certification of practice is to improve public confidence, practitioner competency and therefore public safety.

A continuing theme in discussions about the direction of the paramedic profession is the portability of skills and knowledge between State authorities. The flexibility offered by the “Health Training Package” works against portability as each authority has adopted a different level of skills and knowledge and differing practice guidelines.

ACAP views the NPR program as an important tool to achieving portability through establishing and recording common components and developing clear pathways through the variable components. The establishment of a national register that records an individual practitioners skill and knowledge level as well as currency and is able to report upon this in relation to a specific agencies requirements, (*taking into account privacy guidelines*), will provide an important link between practitioners and the various employing agencies.

The NPR program is in the process of being reviewed to make it more flexible, allowing better integration with separate ambulance authorities and private providers of patient transport services. This rewrite will also take into account the increasing number of ambulance practitioners who operate outside of the traditional domains of ambulance authorities. Such practitioners include Defence Force Medics, industrial paramedics, private practitioners and paramedics operating independently in countries outside Australia.

ACAP views this program as the key to a national voluntary self-regulation program and the revised program will be launched at the ACAP National Conference in Alice Springs during September 2004.

## **6.0 Further Contact:**

The Chair of the ACAP Committee on Standards, Mr Rod Sheather is the contact person associated with this College project at [rsheather@emergency.qld.gov.au](mailto:rsheather@emergency.qld.gov.au)

## 7.0 Recommendations

Ambulance professionals currently fall outside the scope of registration. Nor do they fit completely into a voluntary self-regulation program. Primarily, ambulance practice is regulated by the employing authority with limited consistency between authorities.

ACAP offers a voluntary self-regulatory program that is accessible to all ambulance practitioners:

### Recommendation 1.

***“The review endorses the ACAP NPR program as the desired self-regulating process for ambulance professionals in Victoria.”***

ACAP is actively pursuing the issue of regulation of ambulance practitioners with the aim of providing a high degree of safety to the public and improving public confidence.

### Recommendation 2.

***“The Review acknowledges the work of ACAP in progressing the regulation of ambulance practitioners in Victoria and adopts ACAP as the official body to progress this issue.”***

## Bibliography

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