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**"EXPANDING THE NATIONAL HORIZON – AN EXPLORATION OF NATIONAL  
REGISTRATION FOR AMBULANCE PROFESSIONALS"**

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National registration of the ambulance profession has long been discussed by both employer and employee bodies within the ambulance industry. Documentary evidence of these discussions represents a positive view of this concept. Despite this apparently agreeable environment, the ambulance profession in Australia has not made significant practical progress toward the establishment of a professional register or registering body.

The introduction of a national training package by the Australian National Training Authority which incorporates ambulance industry qualifications and the widespread adoption of this package sets a background to industry qualification. This newly attained position creates an environment which allows qualifications to be benchmarked or at least mapped to the national competencies. This, for the first time, offers an opportunity to compare qualification as an indicator of practice standards across Australia. This applies primarily to the Vocational Education and Training sector, but also to the tertiary sector as a basis for comparing qualification outcomes.

In turn, there is now an opportunity to identify a national standard for qualification and practice for ambulance professional. A national standard can, of course, lead to a national register. And, there are a number of experiences that the ambulance profession can draw on to chart its path toward national registration. These include the Australian examples of nursing registration, teacher registration and the certified practicing accountant models. Internationally, there are also models to draw on specific to ambulance industry registration.

If the ambulance profession is to progress practically toward national registration, then its potential advantages and potential disadvantages must be explored and we all need to consider the question "Why do it?".

Additionally, it is important to explore the roles of the various key players in this issue, including the Australian College of Ambulance Practitioners, the Australian Convention of Ambulance Authorities, employee representative organizations and government. Each has a contribution to the debate and a role to play in the establishment and eventual management of a national register. What will the role of each be?

This presentation will also touch on the legislative differences between states and the management of this issue for the purpose of national professional registration.

In this presentation, I intend to draw the current debate together to inform the way ahead.