

“Imagine If We Did That”

– A global paramedicine conversation, 20 years in the making!

In April 2025 Kirsty Lowery-Richardson, Head of Education at the College of Paramedics joined colleagues Leon Baronowski, Jen Bolster and Lindsay Mackay at the Sixth EMS Leadership Summit to virtually commence a conversation entitled ‘Valuing External Experience – The Portability of Paramedicine’.

The College is keen to simplify routes to international opportunities for its members and continues to work with partners to realise this ambition.

Below is an extract of a conversation where Leon and Lindsay share some insights into their own journeys and experiences as UK educated paramedics working internationally. The full account can be accessed on our website <https://bit.ly/4o4nF0s>



becoming a doctor or a nurse. I laughed and said I didn't want to be stuck indoors and she said, “What about a Paramedic?”

That conversation stuck. A year later, I was at Hallam. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made.

In today's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, stories like Leon's and Lindsay's offer valuable insights into the future of Paramedicine. Sharing their journeys now is especially important for emerging leaders and practitioners seeking fresh perspectives and inspiration. As Paramedicine continues to grow beyond traditional boundaries, understanding these experiences helps us reflect on how far the profession has come, and where it's heading.

How It All Began

Q How did you two first meet, and what drew you both into Paramedicine?

Lindsay: We met at Sheffield Hallam University almost 20 years ago. It was day two of the course, the second paramedicine cohort at Hallam, so classes were small. We had 30 students... well, 29 until Leon bounced in with spiky hair and a huge personality. I remember it like it was yesterday.

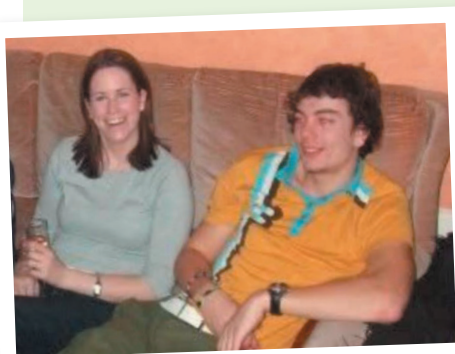
I didn't have a grand plan to become a Paramedic. After high school, I started a management traineeship with a supermarket, then spent three summers working at kids' camps in the USA, at one camp in Rhode Island, we had a few serious medical incidents. The nurse practitioner, Lisa, noticed how calm I was and asked if I'd ever considered

Q What was the culture like for students entering paramedicine at that time?

Leon: Honestly, the faculty was great and the people involved in teaching us back then are so heavily involved in the profession now. We had Liz Harris, Imogen Carter and Richard Pilbery who really set the stage for what it would mean to enter the profession through the higher education route. As students we were also still figuring out the intersection between where the profession was at, and where it was going which definitely drew out some interesting discussions in the pub!

Lindsay: It was a new world back then Paramedicine wasn't as recognised or clearly defined as it is today. We were figuring it out as we went, learning clinical skills, of course, but also navigating what it meant to be a paramedic in a university setting. There was this sense that we were part of something that was just starting to change, moving from a vocational model to a professional one.

We didn't always know what that would look like, and there were moments of uncertainty, but also a real excitement about being on the ground floor of something bigger. You felt like you were helping shape the future, even if you didn't realise it at the time.



Introduction

Lindsay Mackay (Executive Director, Safer Care Victoria) and Leon Baranowski (Senior Lecturer, Monash University and Director at EMS Global) began their Paramedic journeys together in the UK. Over the past two decades, their careers have evolved in different countries, Australia and Canada, culminating in a conversation at the 2025 EMS Leadership Summit about global experiences, resilience, and imagining what paramedicine could become.

Early Challenges

Q How did those early experiences shape your approach to paramedicine?

Leon: My first station placement was rural, small number of patients, limited exposure. I worried about falling behind. But I had two excellent mentors, one male, one female, and they rotated me into city shifts, response units, even facilitated shifts on the rapid response car to get that feeling like you were working as part of a paired crew. That breadth of experience shaped my approach early and I owe them a lot for that. I think most importantly it opened me up to a range of practices vs becoming a copy of my mentors, which allowed me to develop my own approach and rhythm more naturally. Equally having a range of mentors that were happy with how you arrived at your care plans and not needing to follow their way was also very helpful.

Also being supported in an environment where you can ask questions and challenge proactively was helpful. Even as students, we were asking tough questions about patient flow, triage, scope of practice. I remember clearly: I was once told, “Your job is to take people to hospital, full stop.” And I said, “But what if that’s not what the patient needs?”

Expanding Horizons & Moving Overseas

Q What inspired you both to take your careers abroad?

Lindsay: I always dreamed of living in



Australia. My mum says it was all the Neighbours and Home and Away I watched growing up in Scotland. When I saw an advert in a magazine from St John Western Australia offering relocation for experienced paramedics, my partner and I couldn’t resist. We were looking for adventure and new challenges, and it felt like the perfect opportunity.

Leon: Mine was less deliberate. I have always wanted to see more of the world and while working on HEMS in the UK, I got curious about how other systems worked, especially in critical care and Paramedics scope of practice, so I started doing more research. I enjoy skiing and travelled to Whistler each year, not knowing this would become my local ski hill, fell in love with the place, met my partner, and began the long admin grind to migrate to Canada. Took about a year to get it all sorted. We recently transitioned again later last year to Australia in Melbourne, where the process was far easier with AHPRA.

Q What were the biggest surprises or challenges when you arrived in Australia/Canada?

Lindsay: One of the biggest surprises was learning that Paramedicine wasn’t nationally registered. Coming from the UK, where regulation had long been established, the system here felt fragmented. Recognition of qualifications and professional standards varied across states, and there was

no national framework to support development or mobility.

It really highlighted how young the profession was in terms of formal recognition – despite the high calibre of clinicians I met.

Leon: In Canada when I arrived in 2016 Paramedicine was seemed to be viewed as an emergency service and part of being a first responder alongside fire and police, which brought with it the culture, rather than part of the health system. There was little emphasis on decision-making, ethics, or professional autonomy. It was “here’s your protocol follow it.” That felt quite limiting after working in the UK with multidisciplinary frameworks, interprofessional teams and with clinical autonomy.

Q What steps did you have to take to work internationally as a paramedic?

Leon: There’s this myth that moving countries is as simple as applying and boarding a flight. But it’s not. You need clinical equivalency, skills assessments, immigration clearances. Back then, there wasn’t even a playbook for Lindsay and myself. We had to create it!

This led to creating a website www.internationalparamedics.com with a friend and colleague who has also worked across 3 systems, Richard Armour. We made the whole process for obtaining your Canadian Paramedic registration transparent, because when



I got to BC in 2016, I was told I would need to redo my paramedic education again because I hadn't been trained the "BC Way". I think we have helped over 30 people between UK, Ireland and Aus. At least that's what we are aware of, there could be more!

Lindsay: Moving from the UK to Australia meant navigating visa and professional recognition processes. I came on a state-sponsored work visa, which required finding an ambulance service to support my application and verifying my qualifications and clinical experience.

At that time, there was no national registration; each state had its own system. I had to demonstrate clinical equivalency through interviews and assessments, and adapt to new protocols, medications, and service models. Although my UK training aligned well, adjusting to a different system still required effort and learning. Today, national registration through AHPRA has streamlined the process for internationally qualified Paramedics, but securing a visa and understanding the local scope of practice remain essential for successful integration.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Q How did your friendship and shared experiences support your career growth?

Lindsay: Paramedicine has been such a



male-dominated field for a long time, so having Leon, a trusted male colleague and friend, has really helped me build confidence. We have had plenty of late-night chats, facetimes with a wine and conference catchups, swapping advice on tricky situations and career moves. It is great to have someone who understands the unique challenges, and who does not mind the occasional rant or rant back! Our friendship is built on honest conversations and a bit of friendly banter, which has encouraged me to take on new challenges and not take myself too seriously. Honestly, having that kind of support makes all the difference, especially in a profession that is still working on diversity and leadership balance.

Leon: Lindsay has always been that person who says, 'just go for it,' and I've done the same for her. Our friendship has been a constant reminder of what's possible. Fortunately, as technology and platforms have become more integrated with our lives, the ability to stay in touch and navigate time zones makes it so much easier. Now we are both in Australia, we see each other most months and catch up.

Q What lessons have you learned about resilience and adaptability in Paramedicine?

Lindsay: Resilience and adaptability are at the heart of Paramedicine. I have learned that it is essential to lean into change rather than resist it, to remain curious about new approaches, and not to wait for perfect conditions before taking action. The profession is constantly evolving, whether through advances in clinical practice, technology, or the shifting needs of the communities we serve, and we must evolve alongside it.

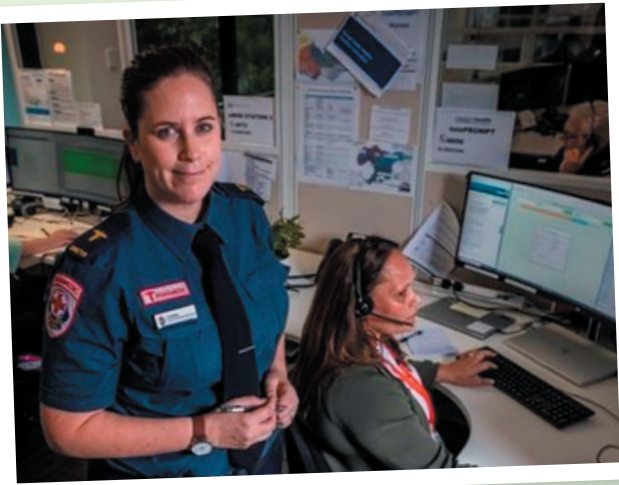
Being adaptable means embracing uncertainty and viewing challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. It is about maintaining focus on patient-centred care while navigating complex, fast-moving environments. Above all, resilience is about persistence, staying committed despite setbacks and continuing to improve both personally and professionally.

Reflections on the Profession's Evolution

Q How has Paramedicine changed over the past 20 years?

Lindsay: As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, I've witnessed many firsts. Today, with women making





up nearly 51 per cent of paramedics in Australia, the focus has shifted from pioneering to leading. This growing gender balance enriches the profession's diversity and leadership, which is vital for meeting future health challenges. I am excited to see what the next 20 years will bring.

Leon: Paramedics today are not only experts in emergency care but also increasingly involved in community health, chronic disease management, and integrated care pathways. The future holds exciting possibilities as Paramedicine continues to expand its scope and influence. It's so good to see it really become recognized and grow as rapidly as it has. It is certainly providing people with more portability and opportunities for a broader career than previously available.

Q What do you see as the future for paramedics internationally?

Leon: The future of Paramedicine internationally lies in breaking free from the traditional emergency care only mindset. Around the world, we're seeing the profession evolve, not just in scope, but in how we define our role in modern health systems. Paramedics are increasingly part of integrated care, mental health response, and community-based models. To get there, we need bolder leadership, more education pathways, and a culture that values clinical judgement and human connection as much as technical skill. We must also continue to advocate for regulation and mobility frameworks that allow paramedics to work across borders and share innovations. If we embrace

collaboration, challenge outdated hierarchies, and invest in our people, Paramedicine can be a global force for patient-centred, adaptable care.

Advice for the Next Generation

Q What advice would you give to Paramedics just starting out or considering a global career?

Lindsay: Be curious, stay open to learning, and never underestimate the

value of saying yes to the unfamiliar. A global paramedic career requires initiative, adaptability, and courage to step into new spaces, even if it means stepping back or sideways to move forward.

I especially encourage female Paramedics to know their voices are not just welcome but essential in shaping the profession's future globally.

Also, build your network early and lean on it often. Some of my greatest

growth came from long-term peer support. Leon and I have supported each other for nearly 20 years through challenges and opportunities. Find people who understand your journey and will champion you, even when they tell you you're mad, like Leon often does.

Closing Thoughts "Imagine If We Did That"

Q What does "Imagine If We Did That" mean to you today?

Leon: It's about daring to imagine a better system and working together to make it happen. That conversation shaped my entire career. If there's one message, we want to leave with you, it's this. Your career in Paramedicine can be as wide and as bold as you imagine it to be. Whether you're just starting out or looking to make a change, don't be afraid to ask "what if?" and back yourself to build the answer. That one "imagine if..." question changed everything. It's how systems evolve. It's how careers start. And it's how professions move forward.



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