

## Submission: Help inform the NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

### About the College

The Australian College of Paramedicine (College) is the peak professional body representing paramedics across Australia since 1973, advocating for excellence in education, practice, and leadership within the paramedicine profession.

### Submission

The College welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* consultation. We commend NSW Health for its leadership in prioritising mental health and wellbeing across the state and for initiating this inclusive, collaborative and forward-thinking process to inform development of this strategy.

As the peak professional body representing paramedics across Australasia, the College strongly supports the vision and principles underpinning this strategy, particularly the commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing for all people in NSW. We support the development of a robust, contemporary, and responsive mental health system that is grounded in multidisciplinary collaboration, evidence-informed education and practice, and person-centred care.

Crucially, the College advocates for clear and formal recognition of paramedics within the strategy, reflecting their essential role in mental health service delivery across community, emergency, and interdisciplinary care settings.

### Paramedics and mental health care

Paramedics are often the first point of contact for people experiencing acute distress, psychiatric crises, or suicidal ideation<sup>1</sup>. In these moments, paramedics provide rapid assessment, de-escalation, stabilisation, and compassionate support<sup>2</sup>. They are uniquely positioned at the intersection of emergency response, community-based care, and system navigation.

The College acknowledges and applauds the significant work already undertaken by NSW Ambulance, as articulated in the NSW Ambulance Strategic Plan 2021–2026. NSW Ambulance has demonstrated leadership in enhancing mental health response capability, including through:

- Specialised mental health response teams
- Strong partnerships with mental health services
- Expanded community-based and alternative-to-ED care options
- A focus on paramedic workforce wellbeing

These initiatives provide a strong foundation from which the *NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing*

*Strategy* can build a more integrated, resilient, and person-centred system.

### **Incorporating the paramedic perspective in the strategy**

Given the centrality of paramedics in frontline and community-based mental health care, it is essential that the paramedic workforce is actively engaged in the development, implementation, and ongoing review of the NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The College urges NSW Health to ensure that paramedics are formally recognised and integrated into key components of the strategy, including:

#### **Crisis response models**

Paramedics play a vital role in mobile crisis teams, co-responder models, and alternative care pathways that support diversion from emergency departments and custodial environments. The strategy should explicitly consider:

- Enhancing multidisciplinary crisis response models
- Expanding community-based alternatives to ED transport
- Strengthening joint response capabilities across NSW

#### **Referral pathways**

Clear, effective, and well-supported referral mechanisms are essential to enable paramedics to connect individuals with the most appropriate services. This includes:

- Streamlined, consistent referral options across NSW
- Access to culturally safe services
- Integration with community, primary and urgent care services, and digital/virtual mental health services

#### **Workforce development and education**

As mental health presentations increase<sup>3</sup> and the role of paramedics evolves<sup>4</sup>, targeted education and workforce development are critical. The College supports:

- Mental health-specific training across assessment, practice, and de-escalation
- Interprofessional learning opportunities with mental health practitioners
- Access to postgraduate qualifications and CPD aligned with mental health competencies
- Alignment with national workforce initiatives, including mental health workforce strategy and undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum reform

#### **Paramedic wellbeing and support**

Paramedics are routinely exposed to high-stress, traumatic, and emotionally charged situations<sup>5</sup>. The strategy should recognise their wellbeing as a critical workforce sustainability factor. To this point, paramedics need:

- Mental health services tailored to the unique demands of paramedicine
- Peer support programs, psychological support, and proactive wellbeing initiatives
- System-level approaches that reduce potential occupational harm
- It is also important to collect data relating to the impact of mental health response on the paramedic workforce.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, the College reaffirms its commitment to working collaboratively with NSW Health and

other stakeholders to build a mental health system that is inclusive, effective, and sustainable. We welcome ongoing collaboration to refine the strategic framework, strengthen referral pathways, and support person-centred, culturally safe care, and we are well positioned to contribute professional expertise, CPD, and best-practice insights in mental health care within paramedicine.

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important initiative and look forward to further opportunities to provide the paramedic perspective.

## References

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3. NSW Government. HealthStats NSW. Oct 2025. Available from: [https://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/indicator?name=-men-sui-ed&location=NSW&view=Trend&measure=Measure2&groups=Age%20\(years\),Presentation%20type,Sex&compare=Age%20\(years\),Presentation%20type,Sex&filter=Age%20\(years\),All%20ages&filter=Presentation%20type,Total%20mental%20health%20presentations&filter=Sex,Persons](https://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/indicator?name=-men-sui-ed&location=NSW&view=Trend&measure=Measure2&groups=Age%20(years),Presentation%20type,Sex&compare=Age%20(years),Presentation%20type,Sex&filter=Age%20(years),All%20ages&filter=Presentation%20type,Total%20mental%20health%20presentations&filter=Sex,Persons), accessed Nov 2025.
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