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Participant Information Sheet – Ahpra registered paramedics employed by Australian jurisdictional ambulance services with experience in applying coercive powers and restrictive practices under mental health legislation

Project Title: Australian paramedics' decision-making processes when using coercive powers and restrictive practices under mental health legislation.

Project Summary:

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Reenie Lowe, PhD student and registered paramedic, School of Health Sciences, Western Sydney University, under the Supervision of Associate Professor Paul Simpson and Associate Professor Liz Thyer, School of Health Sciences, Western Sydney University.

The research will investigate the experiences of Australian paramedics to understand their decision-making processes when using coercive and restrictive practices when dealing with acute mental health crises. For this study, 'coercive powers' can be defined as any use of [legal] authority to restrain another's autonomy can be described as coercive (O'Brien A J & Golding C G, 2003). Restrictive practices include any action that restricts the rights or freedom of movement of a care recipient (Commonwealth Dept of Health and Aged Care, (2024). In this context, these powers may include detaining a patient, physical, chemical or mechanical restraint, powers to search a person and seize objects.

State and territory legislation allow paramedics to involuntarily transport individuals to mental health facilities, and use restrictive practices in certain circumstances, yet little is known about paramedic experiences and decision-making processes when exercising coercive powers and restrictive practices.

This study aims to explore how paramedics navigate these powers, considering both legal and ethical dimensions in managing out-of-hospital mental health crises.

How is the study being paid for?

The research is supported under the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) and the Western Sydney University School of Health Sciences.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a confidential semi-structured interview which will take approximately 1 hour to complete. All interviews will be conducted online via a meeting platform such as Zoom or TEAMS. The interview will be recorded and transcribed using the meeting

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platform software. In the interview you may be asked to describe incidents you've been involved in and the approaches to decision making you've used.

How much of my time will I need to give?

The initial interview will take approximately 1 hour.

What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?

The research aims to explain the decision-making processes around using coercive powers and restrictive practices when paramedics encounter patients experiencing an acute mental health crisis. It aims to fill a gap in current research as well as provide an insight into the factors influencing a decision to use these powers and practices. Participants can expect to gain an understanding of their own and others professional practice, use this for self-reflection, and appreciate the risks and benefits of using coercive powers.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?

The research may examine sensitive subject matter, including topics of suicide, self-harm and mental health crises. There will be an exploration of situations you may have been involved in where difficult decisions have had to be made. It is possible that these topics and recollections may act as a negative "trigger" for you and may cause you anxiety or distress. We aim to support you through this process. A list of support services that you can access is provided towards the end of this information sheet. You will also be provided with the researcher contact details if you need to follow-up with concerns, queries or outcomes from the research.

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate in the research at any time without detriment, up to the point at which the data from your interview has been analysed.

Mandatory Reporting obligations

If you participate in this study strict confidentiality standards will be applied to the information you provide and your privacy will be protected. However, as an Ahpra registered practitioner, the researcher has a legal obligation to report conduct where they reasonably believe another registered health professional is:

- practising in a way that significantly departs from accepted professional standards and placing the public at risk of harm,
- practising with an impairment and placing the public at risk of substantial harm
- practising while intoxicated by alcohol or drugs
- engaging in sexual misconduct in connection with their practice**.**

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant cannot be identified, except with your permission. The information you provide will be held securely. Unless required under mandatory reporting requirements or otherwise legally required, no identifying information will be provided to your employer or any other person without your express consent.

Your confidentiality will be strictly maintained by ensuring your identity is anonymised and you will be referred to by a pseudonym throughout the study. Your data will be held securely at the University in its data repository and managed under a Data Management Plan. Raw data with any identifying personal information can only be accessed by the research team.

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Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?

Please be assured that only the researchers will have access to the raw data you provide. However, your data may be used in other related projects for an extended period of time. These projects may include further research projects, policy and process reviews, legislative reviews and reforms and professional forums within healthcare, paramedicine or mental health. It is anticipated your data may be used for up to a period of 5 years from the date of publication of this research.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate you can withdraw at any time without giving reasons by

- Stopping any interview at any stage
- Declining to participate in future interviews
- Declining to have your responses recorded via video or audio recording
- Requesting to withdraw from the research verbally or in writing to the researcher or the supervisory panel of the researcher.

If you do choose to withdraw, any raw interview data you have provided can be deleted up to point of data analysis. Once data analysis has commenced, information that you have provided cannot be deleted because it will have been integrated into a consolidated dataset as part of the research methodology.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the principal researchers' contact details (see below).

What if I require further information?

Please contact Reenie Lowe if you wish to discuss the research before deciding whether to participate: Reenie Lowe 99807779@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Privacy Notice

Western Sydney University staff and students conduct research that may require the collection of personal and/or health information from research participants.

The University's Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan set out how the University collects, holds, uses and discloses personal or health information. Further details about the use and disclosure of this information can be found on the Privacy at Western Sydney webpage.

What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may email the Ethics Committee through Research Services: humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form. The information sheet is for you to keep, and the consent form is retained by the researcher/s.

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H16405.

Support Services

If you need to access support services you can contact:

Your organisation's support services

- your employers employee assistance provider
- psychologist services provided by your employer

Peer support services

- hand-to-hand peer support https://www.handnhand.org.au/
- your peer support officer at your ambulance service

Crisis support agencies

- Lifeline — call 13 11 14 for crisis support and suicide prevention services
- Beyond Blue — call 1300 22 4636 for support with anxiety, depression, and mental health crises
- Suicide Call Back Service — call 1300 659 467 for counselling for people affected by suicide, or with thoughts of suicide

Government mental health support lines:

- NSW — call the Mental Health Line at 1800 011 511
- QLD — call 1300 MH CALL at 1300 642 255
- SA — call the Mental Health Triage Service at 13 14 65
- TAS — call the Mental Health Services Helpline at 1800 332 388
- NT — call the Mental Health Line at 1800 682 288
- ACT — call the Access Mental Health Line at 1800 629 354

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Explanation of Consent

What will happen to my information if I agree to it being used in other projects?

Thank you for considering being a participant in a university research project. The researchers are asking that you agree to supply your information (data) for use in this project and to also agree to allow the data to potentially be used in future research projects.

This request is in line with current University and government policy that encourages the re-use of data once it has been collected. Collecting information for research can be an inconvenience or burden for participants and has significant costs associated with it. Sharing your data with other researchers gives potential for others to reflect on the data and its findings, to re-use it with new insight, and increase understanding in this research area.

You have been asked to agree to Extended consent.

What does this mean?

When you agree to extended consent, it means that you agree that your data, as part of a larger dataset (the information collected for this project) can be re-used in projects that are:

- an extension of this project
- closely related to this project
- in the same general area of this research.

The researchers will allow this data to be used by bona fide researchers, academics, legislators, and workplace decision-makers in paramedicine, health care and mental health sectors.

To enable this re-use, your data will be held at the University in its data repository and managed under a Data Management Plan. The stored data available for re-use will not have information in it that makes you identifiable. The re-use of the data will only be allowed after an ethics

committee has agreed that the new use of the data meets the requirements of ethics review.

The researchers want to keep the data for up to 5 years for possible re-use. After this time the data will be securely destroyed.

You are welcome to discuss these issues further with the researchers before deciding if you agree. You can also find more information about the re-use of data in research in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – see Sections 2.2.14 - 2.2.18.

https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018