

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Ambulance Victoria

Melbourne – Friday 13 June 2025

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WITNESS

Patrice O'Brien, Chief Engagement Officer, Victoria University.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the next session of the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Ambulance Victoria. Just for the record and Hansard, could you please state your name and the organisation that you are appearing on behalf of.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Certainly. Patrice O'Brien from Victoria University.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I am Joe McCracken; I am the Chair. We will go through the rest of the committee as well.

Michael GALEA: G'day. Michael Galea, Member for South-East Metro.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Ryan Batchelor, Member for the Southern Metropolitan Region.

Georgie CROZIER: Georgie Crozier, Member for Southern Metro and also Shadow Minister for Health and ambulance services.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Welcome. Anasina Gray-Barberio, Northern Metro.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you for coming in. I am Ann-Marie Hermans. I am also a Member for the South-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

The CHAIR: I will just read this out. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information that you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during the hearings, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by that privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be put online and be public on the committee's website.

What I will do now is hand it over to you. You have got a presentation that you want to talk us through, and then we will go through questions from there – I imagine about 5 minutes or thereabouts. Is that okay?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Absolutely, yes.

The CHAIR: And then we have got questions. We will hand it over to you, and then we will go from there.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Okay, no problem at all. Great to be here. I will keep this short and rush through some things, but obviously I am happy to expand as we work our way through.

Visual presentation.

Patrice O'BRIEN: I am sure others before me have, but I would also just like to start by acknowledging that we are meeting on the lands of the people of the Wurundjeri nation, and I would like to pay my respects to elders past and present.

Victoria University has a long history of leading the way in paramedicine education and training. We established Victoria's first bachelor of health science paramedicine degree conversion course. That was for paramedics who had previously been vocationally trained to convert to a higher degree course – that was back in 1995 – and then we had our first pre-employment program in 1999. That innovation was really a catalyst across Victoria, so there was a shift for Victorian ambulance services to move more fully to a pre-employment paramedic education model in 2006. We have continued to expand on our offerings across paramedicine courses, higher ed and TAFE since then, and most importantly, in terms of what I am going to focus on today, we have more recently been awarded a \$10 million investment from the Victorian government, which Victoria

University has also contributed to, to develop a paramedicine centre of excellence, which we are working on at the moment.

As we continue to build on that strong history that I talked about, what we are seeing now are continuously really high numbers of students going through our courses. Last year we had almost a thousand students enrolled, and that was across our higher ed and our vocational courses. One of the things that we are seeing is that many of the students in the vocational courses are able to use that as a really unique pathway into the higher ed course, and one of the great things about that unique pathway is it means that really diverse students can move into that higher ed course who might not be able to have access to that without that unique pathway offering.

As part of the proud history that we have had in paramedicine education and this ever-growing offering that we have in education and training, we are obviously keen to ensure that we are continuing to innovate and to provide a world-class paramedicine education opportunity for our students, and also an offering that really meets the unique needs of today's healthcare needs. That was really the reason for us embarking on the development of a centre of excellence. This slide really tells you a bit about the vision for our centre of excellence, which is to develop a world-leading paramedicine workforce, delivering better health outcomes for the community. The centre will focus on training the next generation of paramedics, providing advanced teaching methods. It will also be enhanced by deep industry engagement – that includes Ambulance Victoria – at every step of the way, and that is something that is really important to us. It will have state-of-the-art simulation spaces, and we will also have a real focus on industry-informed research, which will be a big part of the centre.

I just want to acknowledge up-front that this is a very busy slide, so I will quickly orient you to it so that it makes a little bit more sense. This is the theory of change, also known as a program logic, that really provides our overview about the impact that we want the centre of excellence to achieve. If I orient this to you, what you can see along the bottom of that slide is the big problem statement, and really the problem that we are trying to address is that we know that Australia's paramedicine workforce operates in a very challenging environment, with many factors impacting on things like job satisfaction, career progression and wellbeing. That is further complicated by the really complex healthcare needs of today – we have seen big changes in the type of things that our paramedicine workforce needs to respond to. That is the sort of problem that we are trying to solve.

The next row up from there shows the seven project streams that sit within the overarching program, and I will just do a very quick run through those streams. The first one is a First Nations stream, which is really aiming to foster a network of First Nations staff within the paramedicine workforce. The next one is a diversity stream, which will aim to ensure that the paramedicine workforce of the future reflects the community that it serves. The next is a course modernisation stream, so this is all about making sure that the courses that we offer at Victoria University are really meeting those unique needs and challenges that I have talked about. Then there is the digital simulation stream, which is what I have talked about, the one that will really focus on this state-of-the-art, high-tech simulation for really unique learning opportunities. Really importantly, I think, there is a leadership and training hub stream. This will focus on a lot of postgraduate training and opportunities. The opportunities within this area we want to co-design with industry, and AV will be a really critical partner for that. And then finally, I have talked about it a lot already, but an industry engagement stream that will really ensure that everything that we do has real-world implication to address those real-world issues. So as you go up the theory of change from there, what it really steps us through is what we are going to do to work in those project streams to achieve our short-, medium- and long-term goals to ultimately, up the top, achieve the vision that I talked you through.

This slide here just provides an update of six of our seven project streams. The leadership and training hub – we are starting work on that in the second half of this year. Of particular note I would say is that the work in the infrastructure stream is well underway, and we are doing a lot of co-design work at the moment to design what those simulation spaces will look like.

Then finally this slide here really talks through the role of Ambulance Victoria across the development of the centre of excellence. Ambulance Victoria is co-located at our Sunshine campus – so Ambulance Victoria has a capability hub where they do a lot of statewide training. Also after many years of working really closely with Ambulance Victoria and producing a lot of paramedics of the future, last year we formally signed an MOU with Ambulance Victoria which demonstrates both organisations' commitments to really working together on

developing this centre of excellence. The other things on this slide that I can talk you through more if they are of interest are about how Ambulance Victoria is really intimately embedded in each of those project streams that I just talked you through. So as I said, that is a very rapid romp through this really exciting work, but I am happy to delve into anything further if it would be helpful.

The CHAIR: No worries. We will start with questions, and I will start off. When do you expect it to come online and be fully operational? When is your first intake planned to be?

Patrice O'BRIEN: The first intake will be at the beginning of the year in 2027. We expect the building and all of that sort of thing to be ready to be operational late next year. But then we will need, particularly with the simulation space, some time to settle in and make sure that all of the teachers and educators have got used to using that simulation, so then we would have the first intake in 2027.

The CHAIR: In terms of capacity, what is your vision for how many that would be in that first initial year?

Patrice O'BRIEN: We would hope that we would be looking at continued growth across all of our courses.

The CHAIR: But just to start off, are you thinking 20, 50, 100?

Patrice O'BRIEN: At the moment we have got a thousand within all of our courses; that is across our higher ed and our TAFE courses. In the first intake we would probably be looking at about 300 across those courses. We work closely with industry and with the Department of Health to look at load demand, so we are looking at those kinds of things as well to make sure that we get the numbers right.

The CHAIR: Yes. That is okay. Fair enough. One of the interesting things we have heard in some of the evidence that has already been given – in the structure of AV we have heard criticism that perhaps there is not enough knowledge and expertise in senior levels of leadership, and there is almost a disconnect with senior leadership because they have been brought in and not had knowledge and requisite expertise. Then there has been a focus – in evidence, at least, it has been said – too much on equity and diversity and filling certain quotas for certain things. Do you think that is something that you can overcome in the work that you plan to do here?

Patrice O'BRIEN: I think that we need to be mindful of the role that a university can play in creating all of that change in Ambulance Victoria, operationally.

The CHAIR: But it is a balance, isn't it?

Patrice O'BRIEN: It is. Yes. Let me just double-check on your question: is your concern that quotas are not achieving what they are setting out to achieve?

The CHAIR: Well, probably more the point I am getting at it is the evidence that has been received has suggested that there is not enough focus on core knowledge and skills as opposed to other things, and I am asking you as someone who is putting together this sort of place: how do you respond to that?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Look, I think when we devised the centre of excellence we very deliberately set out to look at some of the challenges for the paramedicine workforce in Victoria and around Australia, and we very deliberately have a focus on the kind of research that we want to do and on the way we want to teach. I mean, addressing the right clinical requirements – it is a no-brainer that we absolutely have to do that, but on top of that we really want to have a focus on workforce capability training and leadership training. We want to be introducing paramedics into the workforce who have a deep understanding of the importance of diversity and inclusion and the importance of good workplace practices. As much as we can, that is what we really want to embed within the way paramedics of the future are trained. Beyond that, with the leadership and the learning hub, where we want to produce postgraduate qualifications, we want people who are already in the workforce to be able to come back in. We are going to do a lot of work to design what that kind of postgraduate qualification should look like, including things like micro-credentialing. We really want to target the areas of greatest need, so some of the challenges that you have found through this inquiry may well inform what some of those areas of greatest need are, and then we would look to really target those areas in the postgraduate qualifications.

The CHAIR: Makes sense.

Patrice O'BRIEN: The other area we want to focus on is research. Trying to change some of these intractable workforce issues we know is really challenging, so we want to look at research that can help with that as well.

The CHAIR: My time has expired, so I had better hand over to Mr Galea, otherwise I might need an ambulance too.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms O'Brien, for coming in today. Just to start with, can you give me a bit of a broad indication of Victoria's reputation – as a state, not the university – in terms of paramedicine training? Do we attract a lot of students internationally or even from interstate, or are most of the students local, to your knowledge?

Patrice O'BRIEN: That is a really excellent question. I am actually not 100 per cent sure. I know in our courses – this does not really answer your question, but we do definitely attract students from all around Victoria. I am not sure how strong the attraction is from interstate and international – I am sorry – but I could find that out and let you know, definitely.

Michael GALEA: Any information you could get would be wonderful. Thank you. Probably in a similar vein – and feel free to take this away as well – in terms of the graduates from the programs especially, I see last year VU itself had just over 700 students undertaking a bachelor of paramedicine. Do the majority of those students end up working in AV, or are a lot going into sister organisations interstate or even overseas? Places like the UK, I know, are big attractors.

Patrice O'BRIEN: It is more the latter at the moment. On the TAFE courses, there is a really broad spectrum of different kinds of employers that our graduates who go through the TAFE courses can go to in that more non-emergency patient transport field. But on those who complete their degree, we do know that they are going interstate and also internationally, often then gaining experience and eventually coming back to Victoria, but we do know that a lot of our students are having great opportunities to go and work overseas.

Michael GALEA: Yes. I know a friend of mine – this was some time ago now – was offered a lot of roles especially in the UK. Obviously the standard of training in Victoria must be well regarded if organisations overseas are looking to us for their recruits.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Absolutely. I think that is absolutely true, and I also think one of the other benefits for Victoria with having that happen is that there are some really interesting models of paramedicine care in the UK that are different to what we have got here, so we are also seeing people come back from the UK and influencing different thinking around best models of paramedicine health care.

Michael GALEA: Interesting. Will any of those models also be incorporated into the work you are doing through the centre of excellence?

Patrice O'BRIEN: That is something we are really interested in. As I said, one of the big drivers behind the problem that we have looked at is this real challenge in how healthcare needs are changing so much, so you have got anything from lack of social cohesion, which can influence occupational violence and that sort of thing, all the way through to big health changes like pandemics and climate disasters and all of those kinds of things.

We suspect that the tried and tested models may not be the models of the future, so we are very interested in doing research into looking at what different models of practice could be applied. You know, like in the UK there are a lot of community paramedics with a real preventative focus. We are really interested in exploring what best practice looks like around the world and what could be introduced here.

Michael GALEA: Indeed. Correct me if I am wrong, but I can only imagine that this centre will also further strengthen Victoria's reputation in the space.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Absolutely.

Michael GALEA: To what degree?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Well, look, it is Australia's first paramedicine centre of excellence at a university. Victoria University is unique in that we have got the dual sector with our TAFE and our higher education. This is one of our absolute highest priority projects at the university at the moment. We are very hopeful that it will really strengthen it to a very high degree.

Michael GALEA: Thank you.

The CHAIR: I will hand over to Ms Crozier.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much, Ms O'Brien, for coming in and speaking to the inquiry and for your submission and presentation. Can I just continue on from Mr Galea's line of questioning in relation to the number of paramedics that are being trained, because I often get emails from people saying, 'I trained as a paramedic and I want to work in Victoria, but I can't.' So they have to go overseas or interstate, and they do not want to. Now, you say that last year there were 707 bachelor of paramedicine applicants doing those courses. That is a large number. What conversations do you have with government or Ambulance Victoria about the needs? And of that 707, how many will be able to work in Victoria, given you said most of the applicants come from Victoria, was your understanding, not interstate or overseas?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Look, I am not sure of the exact number that will be able to go on and work in Victoria, but we definitely do – across all of our courses – do load planning, where we do work –

Georgie CROZIER: Can we have a copy of that model or of that planning that you have got?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes. I can definitely check on that.

Georgie CROZIER: Thank you.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes.

Georgie CROZIER: And the reason I ask that is because Danny Hill this morning, the secretary of the ambulance union, said, 'We've got enough of the emergency workforce' – so enough paramedics to deal with the emergency cases – 'We don't have enough in the non-emergency space.'

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes.

Georgie CROZIER: That is basically what he was saying. My concern is that we are pushing through these paramedics and they cannot get jobs, and that is the feedback I am getting. You have 707, La Trobe does these courses as well as ACU, so we are pushing out all of these graduates but they cannot get jobs, and that is a concern to me. I think it sets up a false expectation for those students who just want to work in paramedicine, and that is the feedback I am getting. So I am just keen to see what discussion you are having to see the numbers that you are putting up?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Look, I think it is a really important question, and I think it is something that we absolutely need to focus and will keep focusing on. I think in terms of there not being enough of a workforce for the non-emergency workforce, this centre will cover off on our TAFE courses as well, which will help us to keep producing those employees who can –

Georgie CROZIER: But there are a lot less numbers – 131 compared to 707.

Patrice O'BRIEN: There are, but the centre that we are developing sits across higher education and TAFE, so, as we are looking at load management, if we have to increase in one area and reduce in another, that is something that we can absolutely always look to do in the future.

Georgie CROZIER: And I am interested in your comments about community paramedics. I think they are a great model. There are some fabulous former paramedics who wanted to set up a community paramedic program. In fact I took the policy to the last election, I think it was, but nevertheless it did not get up. I am not sure it is being supported by the current government, so I am very pleased that you are taking up that. Can you explain to the committee why you think the community paramedic program is so important?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Look, I mean, it is something I would have to say I am absolutely not an expert in, but it is certainly something that I have heard about as we have been embarking on this work. What we would really be looking to do – a lot of that would come more in our research stream and also our industry engagement stream.

Georgie CROZIER: But you are utilising the expertise from former paramedics and bringing them back in upskilling and retraining.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes, that is what we would definitely be looking to do, but we would also be looking at research that would look at –

Georgie CROZIER: The value of that.

Patrice O'BRIEN: the value of that model, how it does work, how it would fit in Victoria, that sort of thing.

Georgie CROZIER: I know it has been done around the world. Thank you very much.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. We will now move on to Ms Gray-Barberio.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thanks very much, Chair, and thank you, Ms O'Brien, for your presentation and your attendance today. I would like to bring you back to the program logic that you presented in your PowerPoint slide. You mentioned in your program streams the willingness for our future paramedics to represent the communities – a reflection of that. Then as part of your program streams you mentioned First Nations and diversity, and you also said in your presentation that you would work closely with Ambulance Victoria around recruiting and supporting First Nations students. How will that work if Ambulance Victoria does not have a dedicated First Nations unit?

Patrice O'BRIEN: One of our streams is to explore how we can do that, and the First Nations stream will really sit across all of the project streams, so when we look at how we can attract First Nations students, first and foremost we need to make sure that we have created a culturally safe environment through the training program. This is a big priority of Victoria University's First Nations action plan: to look at what we are doing within our own backyard first to ensure that we are in a position to attract First Nations students into our TAFE and our higher education courses. Then what we are doing is we are working really closely with Ambulance Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program lead. She is sitting on the project stream working group and really influencing that plan so that we can work together with Ambulance Victoria to look at how we can best create that opportunity. I do not know exactly what that will ultimately look like yet, but that is what that working group is focused on. It is great that we have Ambulance Victoria – such a specific role sitting as part of that working group.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Do Ambulance Victoria have a First Nations working group that advises them?

Patrice O'BRIEN: I do not know.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: So then if you want to be working quite closely with Ambulance Victoria to improve the participation of First Nations students and also looking at the disproportionate health inequities experienced by our First Nations people, will you not consider getting in touch with Aboriginal-led health services to help guide you in this work?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Absolutely. That stream of work is in its absolute infancy at the moment; we have just recently formed the working group. As we develop that stream, they are all the kinds of things that we will look at. I am sure as we work further down that stream, I will know the answers to those questions that you have, but we are just at the very early stages of that stream at the moment.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: That is great. Just quickly following on from the already established line of inquiry of so many paramedicine students graduating with limited job opportunities, what advocacy are you doing with the government to ensure that we can mitigate these lost employment opportunities for our recent paramedicine graduates?

Patrice O'BRIEN: I think the role that we really feel that we can best play is to keep working with industry, understanding what the problems are, doing research to inform it and then using the data that we gather through that to advocate. Again, like I said, that might be looking for new employment opportunities for paramedics, because we know that there are a lot of challenges out there, so we really want to look at what does that future workforce look like and does it operate in non-traditional ways?

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Great. When you talk about industry, the main employer would be Ambulance Victoria. So what advocacy are you or –

Patrice O'BRIEN: For our higher education students that is absolutely right. If they want to stay in Victoria, then that is absolutely right. For students going through our TAFE courses there is a really wide range of employers that we are working with. When we talk about industry being engaged with this, we are also engaging with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and we are also engaging with a lot of other non-emergency patient transport services, so it is broader industry engagement.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thanks very much.

Patrice O'BRIEN: No worries.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. I will now pass over to Mrs Hermans, who is online.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you so much for coming in. I do apologise that you have got to look at me online. I would like to pick up on some of the things that other people have been asking you and just see if I can get a deeper understanding of how this is going to work. Do you have to have quotas for your percentage of students to fill – say, number of women, Indigenous, Torres Strait Islanders, diverse community people? Are you given some sort of 'We're looking for this percentage, and this is what we're actually trying to encourage'? Or is it very much open – there are not going to be students that might not fit any of these criteria that would actually apply and could be turned away?

Patrice O'BRIEN: No, we do not have quotas. Victoria University does have a very, very diverse student cohort, so we have not had the need for quotas. Victoria University has been very focused on creating educational pathways that really suit diverse student cohorts. We are known to have one of the most diverse student cohorts of any university in Australia. That does not mean that students would be turned away – in fact quite the opposite. As I touched on, using pathways through our TAFE courses, through that pathway we have got lots and lots of stories of our students who can get into a higher education course who may not otherwise be able to do so.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: If the workplace environment was able to be appropriately adjusted, it might be something that, for instance, mothers with kids in school that are wanting to retrain would consider as a pathway. There are a couple of questions I have. One is to do with placement, and the other one is to do with the UK observations. You have mentioned people that have been trained coming back with specific things, saying, 'We would actually like to see and explore this further.' Are there any comments that you would like to make in terms of placement concerns, issues or things that you have found would be the most functional way to do it? Secondly, is there anything that you would like to leave us with in terms of what has been an observation in the UK that you think might be helpful for us to understand in our inquiry as a possibility for the future?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Just on the second one, I am not really expert enough on what is coming back from the UK. Again, as we progress further through this project and we do more research, I may become one. But I am not yet, so I probably could not comment any further on that. I more know that anecdotally. In terms of placement concerns, do you mean student placements while they are going through their course, or do you mean graduate placements at the end?

Ann-Marie HERMANS: I guess both. We have been hearing a number of issues that have been coming up. Obviously there are students that go out on placement, so just in terms of your students, has there been any feedback or any parameters that you have been having to look at in terms of putting students into workplace placements in, say, Ambulance Victoria and any issues that are coming back as feedback where you would think, 'These are some of the things we need to think about'?

Patrice O'BRIEN: Not to my knowledge. It is not something that has been presented to me as a concern, of students facing challenges in the workplaces that they are on placements in. We obviously keep a really close eye on our students when they are on placement, and there are a lot of vehicles for them to raise any concerns. I am not aware of any consistent concerns that have been raised through our paramedicine course.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Over to you, Mr Batchelor.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair. Ms O'Brien, thanks so much for coming in. I was going to ask some questions about graduate destinations, but they have been covered off. On that, do you do a formal graduate destination survey of your cohort?

Patrice O'BRIEN: There is a formal graduate destination survey broadly across the whole university. I am sure we can drill down into the results of that.

Ryan BATCHELOR: If you have previously done that, I think it would be interesting for the committee to understand partly where people are landing but any insights, if you have already done the work, on why people are choosing to be places or whether they move around. Sometimes those things can be really illuminating and would be for the committee, so anything you have got and you could provide on notice would be great.

The other thing I just wanted to ask about – we have heard a lot about the significant challenges that many practising paramedics face in being first responders, obviously dealing with some quite confronting and increasingly challenging encounters with members of the community who are affected by a range of issues or else involved in trauma experiences. How do your training programs build in resilience to assist people going into a career which can be quite confronting? How are you working on those issues?

Patrice O'BRIEN: It is a great question. I think one of the things that we really want to focus on through the centre of excellence in the simulation spaces is creating exposure to what those real-world experiences can feel like. Then a really important part of that is having space for the students, after they go through those simulations, to debrief so that they have the opportunity to pre-learn the skills that they need to be able to build that resilience but also the opportunity to pre-learn the skills to have time and space to reflect on what has just happened. If they are practising that through their training, then our goal is that that becomes an ongoing practice that they take into the workforce with them.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Great. Sounds really helpful and healthy as a way of doing practice learning. And hopefully one of the things we have just heard from our previous witnesses – that might start to foster a culture within the profession of that reflection, which could help deal with some of the probably more trauma based –

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes, and if I could just quickly add to that, we are working with Ambulance Victoria to co-design the simulation spaces, and as I said, Ambulance Victoria have got a presence.

Ryan BATCHELOR: So they are engaged in that process?

Patrice O'BRIEN: 100 per cent, so every single one of these project streams Ambulance Victoria is engaged with. And they have a presence – they have a capability hub on our Sunshine campus. What we hope as well is that there will be times when the students are using the simulation spaces alongside current practising paramedics together, and that then –

Ryan BATCHELOR: Part of professional development.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Part of professional development, but also that then when we go through those debriefing processes – and we will have specific breakout rooms for it and all of that sort of thing; it is being built into the design – that will be hopefully able to influence practising paramedics with those different ways of working.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Sounds like a great partnership with Ambulance Victoria.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes.

The CHAIR: We have finished the formal set of questions, but I know we have got a couple more questions left. I am going to go to Ms Gray-Barberio first and then I will finish off with Mr Galea.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thanks very much, Chair. Just quickly, Ms O'Brien, in a previous role I was very fortunate to work alongside paramedics, with new graduates. Some of the commentary that came out of that was, had they known that it was going to be so difficult to find employment – like Mr Galea has already mentioned today with his friends, a lot of them did go over to the UK because that is where the jobs were, right? They did not want to lose their skills and were very eager to practise that. Are you concerned that we are also losing a lot of capital in the process with regard to – and I also just want to mention, given the mass exodus as well of paramedics due to burnout and stress and so on, and I know you have already just answered Mr Batchelor's question around how you build in those systems of resilience. Is this something that as a university you are at the forefront of in the work that you are doing and looking ahead to being a leader in a centre of excellence as well in paramedicine?

Patrice O'BRIEN: I mean, I think you have nailed it. That is one of the main reasons that we are doing this work, and a big focus on the work that we are doing is really – as I said, the clinical skills are always absolutely critically important, but with the work that we are doing we really want to focus on the workforce and the organisational issues as well as much as we possibly can, because we know that they are the things that often impact on paramedics leaving the profession. We know that sometimes it is not the traumatic things that they see in their day-to-day jobs that are the hardest things, but it is the workplace environments that they take those experiences back to. We really want to make sure that our research and our postgraduate qualifications really focus on improving those things so that paramedics can have a healthier career, because we do believe it is possible to face those challenges if the workforce that you bring them back to provides the inoculation appropriately against those challenges.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Great. Thanks very much.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. I will just say my friend did actually get a job in Victoria, but she had good offers overseas – just in case she is watching.

I just want to clarify as well, Ms O'Brien – and we have spoken about this a few times now – for the over 700 people enrolled in the bachelor of paramedicine last year, I assume it is a three-year degree. Is that right.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Yes, that is right.

Michael GALEA: So that does not mean 700 graduates in one year.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Correct. That is right.

Michael GALEA: I just wanted to clarify that. Thank you.

Patrice O'BRIEN: Great clarification.

Georgie CROZIER: I know. I understood that.

Michael GALEA: I know. I was not saying that you did not, just clarifying.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much. We really appreciate your time today, Patrice. It has been good to hear from you.

Patrice O'BRIEN: It was a pleasure.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. We are going to bring this session to a close. Thank you.

Witness withdrew.