

## Hillside

# National scheme needed for paramedics

A national standards and accreditation scheme is needed for paramedics, according to the Member for McEwen (Vic), Rob Mitchell.

He told federal parliament qualified paramedics have to re-sit their exams every time they move interstate.

The lack of a national system means different education standards and requirements within different jurisdictions.

“In some cases one can qualify as a paramedic after doing a six week course, whereas someone working for Ambulance Victoria requires many years of full-time study,” Mr Mitchell said.

Better workforce mobility and improved support for rural and remote regions would be some of the benefits from a national scheme.

“We should move to national standards and accreditation to ensure that every Australian can receive high quality, professional service that will ensure the patient’s welfare is not put at stake,” he said.



**DIFFERENT STROKES:** Standards for paramedics vary state by state. Photo: aapone



**STILL STRUGGLING:** Aid to Africa as important as ever. Photo: aapone

## Aid checks vital

AUSTRALIA’S aid program should be subjected to rigorous evaluation checks to ensure it is achieving its aims, the Member for Fraser (ACT), Andrew Leigh has told federal parliament.

Speaking about Australia’s \$201 million aid program for Africa, Mr Leigh said it is important that programs are put under scrutiny so their effectiveness is maximised.

“My personal view is that the Australian aid program should carry out more randomised trials – a rigorous evaluation tool that is becoming increasingly common in the developing world,” he said.

“More recently, the Minister for Foreign Affairs has established an independent panel to undertake a review of the future direction of Australia’s aid program.

“This kind of analysis is critical if we are to maintain public support for the Australian aid program.”

As economies in China and India continue to develop at a fast pace, bringing many people in the region a higher standard of living, many

countries in Africa are struggling to make headway.

While incomes per capita in China have quadrupled, some incomes in Africa have not lifted much in the past 40 years.

However, Mr Leigh said there are hints things might be changing. He emphasised the benefits of keeping up a strong aid program to Africa in areas such as climate change, world trade and the fight against terrorism.

“We give because this region is one of the most impoverished in the world,” he said.

“For the most part our donations are driven by generosity but it so happens that even a selfish Australia would want to donate.

“By raising African standards we create new markets for our exports and probably also reduce the threat of extremism.”

Mr Leigh said with many Asian countries beginning to prosper the challenge now was to raise living standards for the “bottom billion” of the world’s population, many of whom are in Africa.