



# STRONGER RURAL HEALTH STRATEGY

## Streamlining General Practice Training

This initiative under the Stronger Rural Health Strategy will implement new arrangements to simplify existing General Practitioner (GP) training and qualification pathways, and support non-vocationally recognised (non-VR) doctors attain specialist GP status. The nine current pathways to specialist GP status will be rationalised into two; delivered through the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), giving the Colleges a greater role in delivering and managing training. The initiative will support existing non-VR doctors to qualify as vocationally recognised (VR) through a targeted Fellowship Support program. The initiative also provides an additional 100 training places from 2021 earmarked to support Rural Generalist trainees.

### **Investment**

An additional investment of \$86.4 million over four years from 2018 will fund the initiative.

### **Support for non-VR doctors**

A one-off Fellowship Support program will be available between 2019 and 2023, delivered by the RACGP and the ACRRM, for non-VR doctors who are providing GP services to attain Fellowship.

By enrolling on a formal pathway to Fellowship with the RACGP or ACRRM, medical practitioners seeking to become specialist GPs will have access to the highest tier Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items during training. Medical practitioners are not obligated to join a Fellowship pathway, however those who do not attain Fellowship of either the RACGP or ACRRM and who are therefore not vocationally recognised before 1 July 2023, will no longer be able to access the highest tier MBS GP items.

### **Training places**

The Commonwealth will continue to fund 1,500 Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program training places per year across the two College pathways, and will fund an additional 100 Rural Generalist places from 2021. Targets for the distribution of training places across regional and remote areas will ensure a continued focus on rural and remote GP workforce distribution.

The streamlined pathways to Fellowship and the support program for non-VR doctors will come into effect on 1 January 2019. Transition of the AGPT program to the GP Colleges will be staged between 2019 and 2021, with the RACGP and ACRRM assuming full responsibility for the program by 2022.

Trainees on the AGPT program, the Remote Vocational Training Scheme, and the ACRRM Independent Pathway will be able to continue to train as planned without any material impacts.

The 3GA programs that currently provide non-VR doctors pursuing Fellowship (of either College) access to MBS GP Items outside the above-mentioned programs will cease by 30 June 2023.

Practitioners may continue to use these provider numbers until that time.

From 1 January 2019, medical practitioners on the RACGP Practice Experience Program will be able to apply for a Practice Experience Program 3GA provider number through the RACGP.

### **Distribution**

There are currently around 4,900 non–VR doctors in Australia. Many of these currently work in rural and regional Australia. These changes will support these doctors to gain fellowship and ensure those communities can see a specialist GP trained to the highest industry standards. Distribution of training places will be designed to ensure a continued supply of skilled doctors in rural and remote areas.

From 2019 the overall number of places on a pathway to Fellowship will be capped, and the cap will be administered by the GP Colleges. To ensure the GP profession is neither in under or oversupply the evidence-based cap will be determined by the Department of Health and endorsed by the National Medical Training Advisory Network.

### **Further information**

Updates on reform progress of the reform and further information:

- Department of Health's website [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)