

JOINT STATEMENT

5 May 2023

BUDGET MUST DELIVER EQUITABLE EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS FOR GP REGISTRARS

The following can be attributed as quotes to both GPRA President Dr Karyn Matterson and AMA President Professor Steve Robson:

General practice is one of the cornerstones of our health system, ensuring that patients have access to affordable and accessible health care.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) and General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA) are calling on the Commonwealth Government to support general practice training by committing to equitable employment conditions for GP registrars and adopting measures that ensure that:

- salaries for GP registrars are comparable to their hospital-based counterparts
- GP registrars have meaningful access to leave, including parental, personal, annual, study and cultural leave.

Delivering better employment conditions for GP registrars will boost participation in GP training and address current GP shortages, ensuring patients continue to have affordable access to specialist GP services, and save money in the long term by keeping people out of hospital through the delivery of more care in the community.

The declining interest in general practice among doctors in training is driven by several factors, particularly the inequity of employment conditions between GP registrars and their hospital-based counterparts. Trainees who chose to leave the hospital system to enter GP training face a significant cut in salary and have inferior entitlements in areas such as parental leave, personal leave, and long service leave.

As member-based organisations representing the medical sector and future GPs, both organisations are hoping next week's Federal Budget includes investment in Australia's next generation of GPs. It must comprehensively address the inequitable employment conditions for GP trainees to stem the tide of doctors in training choosing other specialities over general practice by adopting and funding policies that lift GP registrar salaries to match their hospital-based colleagues and ensure equitable leave entitlements.

This is essential if we are to restore interest in GP training and build a general practice workforce which meets community demand. General Practices have always and will continue to play a critical foundation in training our next generation of GPs, but more support is urgently required.

A 2022 members survey by GPRA highlighted a key concern for current GPs in training as the reduced remuneration experienced when commencing GP training (on average 12 per cent), while a recent March 2023 survey by General Practice Students Network (GPSN) highlighted remuneration as a key barrier to future medical students even considering General Practice as a career.

Medical graduates are turning to other specialty areas, with the growth of the non-GP specialist workforce continuing to outpace any growth in the GP workforce. Only 15 per cent of medical graduates are interested in a career in general practice.



AMA and GPRA welcome recent efforts from governments to explore how this can be addressed, including the expansion of Single Employer Model pilots and consultations on the feasibility of a portability of leave entitlement scheme for GP trainees. However, greater urgency is required.

Failure to act now will have significant consequences for the future of Australia's general practice workforce and general practice as the foundation of our health system.

Recent AMA research ([*The general practitioner workforce: why the neglect must end*](#)) has shown that the demand for GP services has increased by approximately 58.4 per cent over the 10 years from 2009 to 2019. While demand for GP services has increased, the supply of services has not kept pace. The research report estimates that there will be an undersupply of around **10,600 GP FTEs by 2031–32** if GP training places continue to remain unfilled, and the rate of retirement and attrition from the profession escalates, which is not an unlikely scenario.

Despite growing needs in the community, the Australian General Practice Training Program has been undersubscribed since 2017, with the impacts of unfilled training places being significant for practices and communities. In 2023, 252 of the 1500 available first year GP training places were empty.

There is no time to wait – the future of General Practice is at a crossroads and it is critical the Government chooses the right path now.

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AMA media contact: AMA +61 427 209 753 | media@ama.com.au

GPRA media contact: 0435 077 935 | communications@gpra.org.au

About GPRA

General Practice Registrars Australia is the only independent organisation supporting GP trainees and protecting their rights. As the peak national representative body for the next generation of GPs in Australia, we represent over 20,000 members, comprising GP trainees, prevocational doctors and medical students interested in general practice. To find out more about GPRA visit www.gpra.org.au