



2026 *Intern Guide*

Your essential companion for navigating the challenges, opportunities, and support networks of your intern year.

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Dr Kit Smith
Avant member

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AMA President's message

Dr Danielle McMullen, Federal AMA President

Welcome to the next chapter of your medical journey. Internship is a time of tremendous growth and transformation. I recall my own first days on the wards: the mix of nerves and excitement, the steep learning curves, and the camaraderie formed with colleagues who understood the unique pressures of those long hospital shifts. I started my internship by jumping

straight into a rural emergency department term, and it was a fantastic way to start. There were moments of uncertainty, but also profound satisfaction as I began to understand the privilege and responsibility of directly caring for people. As you'll discover, textbooks and tutorials can only teach you so much — it's the hands-on experience of assessing patients and caring for patients every day that truly shapes who you are as a doctor and reminds you why you chose this path.

The Australian Medical Association stands proudly with you as you take these next steps. We are a trusted national organisation that unites doctors from all specialties and career stages. By joining the AMA, you will become part of a national community dedicated to improving healthcare for

patients and the working lives of doctors.

We advocate for fair, safe working conditions, strong supervision, and ongoing education to help every doctor thrive. Through federal policy work, we champion intern welfare, push for adequate hospital resourcing, and fight for sensible rostering and safe hours. We've got your back on wellbeing, professional development, and your right to a supportive workplace. With a dedicated secretariat in Canberra, and links right across the country, the federal AMA is well connected with key decision-makers in government and Parliament — ensuring your voice is heard where it matters most. There are many ways you can help strengthen our advocacy — whether through councils and committees or at one of our events.

You'll have the chance to raise the issues that matter most to you. I first joined the AMA as a medical student and joined my local NSW doctors-in-training committee from internship onwards. I was inspired by the power of unity then, and I remain so today. It is an honour to now lead the AMA, and I hope you will join us.

Our inaugural federal AMA Intern Guide is a companion guide, designed to support, inform, and inspire you as you embark on your career as a doctor. As you navigate the highs and lows of internship, remember that you are not alone. Reach out to your colleagues, supervisors, and to the AMA — we are here to support you every step of the way.



"There is trouble up in the Territory again. There is nearly always trouble in the Territory" – Sydney Telegraph, 1915

It's fair to say that not much has changed about this assertion from the last century. The Territory is a wild and bamboozling place. To practice medicine in the Northern Territory is to accept a

The AMA NT membership:

Why Interns Should Join AMA Northern Territory

Dr John Zorbas, AMA NT President

professional challenge unlike any other in Australia. It is confounding. It is rewarding. Most of all, it is unforgettable.

Working in the NT allows clinicians to engage with a breadth of pathology and clinical complexity that is rarely seen elsewhere in the country. From the remote clinics of Arnhem Land to the busy wards of Royal Darwin and Alice Springs Hospitals, the learning curve is steep, but the autonomy is unmatched. Here, doctors are often working in incredibly resource-limited settings, making decisions that truly alter the trajectory of a patient's life. It is a place where you are not just a cog in a vast machine, but a vital part of the

community fabric in one of the most beautiful parts of Australia.

However, the very factors that make the NT unique - our remoteness, our transient population, and our resource constraints - also create significant pressure on the medical workforce. In an environment where resources are often stretched and the clinical burden is high, there is a constant risk of burnout and the erosion of professional standards. The AMA NT stands as a bulwark against these pressures. We ensure that the drive to serve our communities does not come at the cost of the workforce's wellbeing or patient safety.

Whether you work here for six months, six years or a lifetime, you will make friends you will never forget. You will encounter clinical lessons and experiences that will shape you for the rest of your career.

There is nowhere like the NT. Don't just take my word for it though. Come and see it for yourself.

Please feel free to contact the AMA NT:
Ph: 08 8981 7479
E: kwarthold@amant.com.au





To the future leaders:

A welcome to our interns

Dr Sanjay Hettige, Federal AMA Council of Doctors in Training Chair

Congratulations on reaching this milestone in your medical career. As Chair of the AMA Council of Doctors in Training, it is a real privilege to introduce you to the federal AMA Intern Guide. This resource has been built with interns in mind, shaped by the experiences of doctors who have walked the same path you are about to begin.

There will be late-night calls, moments that make your heart race, and days where you feel like you're finally finding your feet. You will learn quickly, often on the fly, and you will do it alongside your peers. Many of them will become the people you celebrate with, complain with, and rely on for the rest of your career. Right now, you might be feeling excited, nervous, overwhelmed, or all of the above. That is completely normal. Just remember you are not doing this alone. Support is there when you need it, and this guide is here to help you navigate one of the most challenging and rewarding stages of your journey so far.

This is the time to make full use of what the AMA offers, including workplace advocacy, wellbeing resources, professional development, and clear guidance on safe working conditions. These are not add-ons. They exist because they genuinely make a difference to your training and your safety. The AMA Council of Doctors in Training is committed to making sure interns are heard at every level of decision-making in health. We advocate for fair pay, safe working hours, proper supervision, and equitable access to training opportunities. The conversations we have with governments, colleges and hospitals are shaped by what we hear from interns on the ground.

This guide reflects our commitment to supporting you as doctors and as individuals. I encourage you to use it throughout the year, both as a reference and as a reminder that you have a whole community behind you. Reach out to your colleagues, your supervisors, or the AMA when you need help or advice. The challenges ahead are real, but so is the support around you. You're stepping into a year that will shape your career and your confidence more than you might expect.

Welcome to the journey.

AMA MEMBER BENEFITS

Join Australia's peak medical professional association, advocating together for your rights and better health outcomes for our communities.
Benefits of the AMA include:

**Medical journal of Australia**

22 editions of the highly-respected journal every year.

**Policy and advocacy**

Advocacy on important issues that matter most to you.

**Limited legal assistance**

General advice on routine legal matters impacting doctors.

**Workplace relations**

Advisors to help guide you through any workplace issues.

**AMA neXt tool**

An interactive online tool comparing national employment conditions

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**Coaching services and career solutions**

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An interview with a doctor in training

Dr Natasha Abeysekera

Doctor in Training, Dermatology unaccredited registrar and AMA26 Convenor

When and where did you undertake your intern year?

I did my intern year in 2020 at the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital.

What did you find was the biggest challenge during your intern year?

Honestly? Moving states! It was a huge shift — new hospital, new city, no established support network. I had to put a lot of energy into building new friendships while simultaneously learning how to be a doctor. And then there was the paperwork... I learned more about forms, faxes (yes, actual faxes!), and hospital admin than I ever expected in medical school.

I also had a good dose of imposter syndrome. A lot of people already knew each other, were comfortable in the hospital, and were juggling research or master's degrees. I felt like I was playing catch-up from day one.

How did you overcome your hurdles?

With time, perspective, and a bit of self-kindness. I tried to stay focused on running my own race — being a good doctor for my patients, a supportive teammate, and a present friend and family member. Something that really helped was counting the small wins: submitting a research protocol, getting to teaching, finishing my discharge summaries on time, or even making it to Pilates. Even on days when nothing felt "big," I had still achieved something.

What is one piece of advice you wish you had been given during this period?

Carry snacks everywhere. (Only half a joke.)

But more seriously, I wish I had listened to the advice I was already given: take it easy on yourself. Don't overload intern year with extra commitments.

Give yourself time to learn the practical side of medicine — it's a big enough transition on its own, and you don't need to add more pressure.

How are you now participating with the AMA, and how are you finding this valuable?

Moving states meant rebuilding my community from scratch, and the AMA has been a huge part of helping me find my people. Beyond the friendships, it makes me feel connected to the bigger picture — the advocacy, the system-level improvements, and knowing we're working to make things better for both patients and doctors across Queensland and Australia.

Dr Abeysekera is the AMA26 National Conference convenor.

To register for AMA26, please visit: ama.com.au/events



Dr Tash's top 5 helpful hints for interns:

- 1. Prioritise sleep.** Truly. Everything feels easier when you're rested.
- 2. Stock your locker like your future self will thank you.** Toothbrush, toothpaste, and your favourite non-perishables. My stash includes caramel latte sachets, earl grey, honey oats, noodles, tiny teddies and rice cakes — no judgement; it has saved me and several colleagues more than once.
- 3. Ask for help — always.** Whether it's "Where's that form?" or "Why did you choose that treatment?" — people are kinder than you think, and you're never expected to know everything.
- 4. Get yourself a GP.** Book a simple "getting to know you" appointment NOW. When you eventually need care, you'll be grateful you already have someone.
- 5. Preload AMH, ETG and UpToDate on your phone.** You'll use them constantly. It saves time, reduces stress, and means you always have reliable information at hand.

INTERN CHECKLIST

Your essential guide for a successful first year

Starting your internship can feel both exciting and overwhelming, but having a clear roadmap from day one makes all the difference. The transition into clinical practice is smoother when you understand your environment, communicate effectively, stay organised, and look after your wellbeing. The following guide outlines practical tips across orientation, teamwork, patient care, administration, professionalism, and rural practice—designed to help you navigate your new responsibilities with confidence. Remember, you're part of a team, and support is always available as you grow into your role.

1. Getting started & orientation

- Attend a thorough handover with outgoing interns; ask questions about the rotation and unit specifics.
- Check your pager and join team group chats (WhatsApp, Teams, etc.).
- Identify your supervisor and key contacts (registrars, consultants, nurses); know how to reach them quickly.
- Familiarise yourself with rosters, shift swaps, overtime approval, and meeting schedules.
- Locate essential equipment and kits (e.g., HALO kits in rural hospitals); know where to find forms and handover documents.

2. Teamwork & communication

- Introduce yourself to the team and allied health staff; learn everyone's roles and preferred communication channels.
- Respect and get to know your nurses; understand their skills and how you can support each other.
- Ask for help early and often—no one expects you to know everything.
- Take handovers seriously; ensure they are clear, concise, and use frameworks like ISBAR (Identify, Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation).
- Trust your colleagues and build a supportive network; pay it forward by helping students and peers.

3. Clinical practice & patient care

- To prepare for rounds; print patient lists and review overnight events.
- Know your clinical responsibilities: ward rounds, clinics, theatre, and allied health meetings.
- Prioritise and triage jobs; urgent patient needs come first.
- Master basic procedures (e.g., cannulas, IDCs, NGTs), prescribing common medications, and ordering investigations.
- Document everything contemporaneously; use templates and ensure discharge summaries are up to date.
- Know escalation pathways for deteriorating patients and when to call for help (registrar, MET call, retrievals).

4. Organisation & administration

- Keep a diary or clipboard with patient details, jobs, and priorities.
- Understand discharge planning, booking outpatient appointments, and chasing results for discharged patients.
- Learn how to arrange shift swaps, overtime, and complete timesheets.
- Save key clinical resources, guidelines, and contacts on your phone for quick access.

5. Wellbeing & professionalism

- Take regular breaks, eat well, stay hydrated, and look after your physical and mental health.
- Debrief after difficult cases; seek support from peers, mentors, or formal services if needed.
- Maintain professionalism: be punctual, honest about your limitations, and respect patient confidentiality.
- Cultivate interests and relationships outside medicine; balance is key for long-term success.
- Familiarise yourself with your rights and workplace conditions; know where to seek help for workplace issues.

6. Rural & remote tips (if applicable)

- Know your environment: key contacts, equipment locations, and local protocols.
- Use telehealth and retrieval services early for advice and patient transfers.
- Build rapport with small teams; respect and communication are vital in rural settings.

Remember: You are not alone—support is always available. Be kind to yourself and others, and don't hesitate to ask for help. Good luck with your internship!

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WHO WE ARE HERE FOR:

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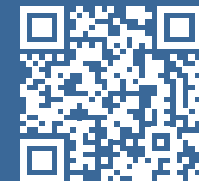
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Interning at RDH 2025

Dr Daphne McLeod

Why the NT?

I had never set foot in the Northern Territory before receiving my offer to intern at Royal Darwin Hospital in 2024. After a quick trip to Darwin to visit my cousin and meet some friendly faces at RDH, I signed my contract. Being undecided about my future medical career, I wanted my internship to be both professionally and personally fulfilling. After 11 months of living and working in the Territory, I would not want to be anywhere else. Here's why..

Working in the NT

The Territory is a culturally rich and diverse place, being

home to the world's oldest living culture. At intern orientation, a speaker noted that some of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities live in the most remote places on Earth. Darwin also has a strong South-East Asian influence and attracts people of all backgrounds, professions and interests - making the population we serve incredibly diverse.

As a regional centre (MM-2), RDH offers close-knit teams and regular opportunities to up-skill early in training.

Some noteworthy experiences include performing an abdominal paracentesis in cardiology, learning ultrasound-guided cannulation and admitting shifts in general medicine, suturing a skin graft and using our official "Maggot Manual" in plastic surgery, and spending my final rotation in a rural generalist term in Nhulunbuy (Gove; MM-7) in East Arnhem Land.

These opportunities would not have been possible or as enjoyable without the friendly, collegiate nature

of Royal Darwin and Gove District Hospital. I am now of the opinion that the Territory attracts some of the most good-natured and generous doctors and learning from them has been a privilege. This extends to our JMO workforce, Medical Education Unit and Top End Trainee Committee, who have been a consistent source of support during internship. These teams go to great lengths to ensure we receive the rotations and leave we request, and genuinely listen to our feedback.

Outside of work

Darwin is the gateway to some of Australia's most beautiful national parks, including Litchfield, Kakadu and Nitmiluk. Many "dry season" weekends were spent camping, swimming in waterfalls, and enjoying the company of my cousin and new friends. Other free time was spent soaking in community events like the Darwin Aboriginal Arts Festival, the annual Laksa Festival, Territory Day (BYO fireworks), line

dancing and run club.

One of the most memorable weekends was Barunga Festival, where the small Aboriginal Community of Barunga (four hours south of Darwin) welcomed hundreds of people for three days of local arts, sport, music and culture. I was also lucky to have family and friends visit, with jumping croc tours by day and sunsets on Mindil beach market by night.

Final thoughts

My adventure as a junior doctor in the Territory will continue into 2026 and beyond. There are simply too many fulfilling opportunities to be anywhere else. If you are considering a change or feeling the pull of the Territory, consider spending your junior doctor year(s) here with us. I am always happy to share more about life and work in the Territory.



Membership application form

Intern membership application form

An AMA membership is tax deductible.
For more information, please visit ama.com.au or call 1300 133 655

Prefix:	Career stage:	Ahpra ID:			
First name:	Middle name:	Last name:			
Email:					
Address:					
State:	Postcode:	Phone Number:			
Date of birth:	Female:	Male:	Non-binary:	Prefer not to say:	
Are you Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?	Yes, Aboriginal:	Yes, Torres Strait Islander:	Yes, both:	No:	Prefer not to say:
Hospital employed at:					
University graduated:					

Membership application

Terms of Membership:

By applying for membership, I agree to abide by: the Constitution of the Australian Medical Association (AMA Limited): the Constitution or By Laws of the AMA; the AMA Code of Ethics and the membership terms and conditions.

Your subscription is subject to approval by the AMA Board of your nominated State. Upon approval you will receive a membership pack. Any application not approved by the Board will be notified in due course and your payment will be refunded. The Australian Medical Association Limited and state AMA entities comply with the Privacy Act 1988. Please refer to the AMA Privacy Policy to understand our commitment to you and information on how we store and protect your data.

I understand that the AMA may increase fees with effect from 1 January or each year and will notify me of these increases at least one month in advance.

Full name:

Signature:

Date:

Payment/Billing Options:

Billing frequency:

Monthly

Annual

Payment options:

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Next steps:

The AMA membership team will process your membership through the AMA join process. You will be then sent an email to opt in to your preferred payment option, followed by your AMA welcome pack and membership information.

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Your career info:

Your career grows here. This section provides you with essential tools and key contacts to guide you through your first year and support your professional journey every step of the way.

The AMA neXt tool:

The AMA know that Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs) are complex, hard to find and hard to read. It can be daunting navigating these EBAs and deciding where you want to take your career next. AMA neXt helps you cut through the weeds of EBA awards, giving you an easy-to-understand snapshot of important rights and conditions such as salary, base hours, penalty rates, and leave entitlements in each state and territory.

The tool allows you to print a summary of your chosen state or territory, and make a side-by-side comparison of two jurisdictions. You can use AMA neXt to better understand your collective rights, to compare your options, and even use it as an advocacy tool to improve the working rights of doctors.



AMA council and committee representation:

The AMA Council of Doctors in Training (CDT) represents the views and concerns of the AMA's doctors in training members regarding professional and workplace issues.

CDT develops policy on the implications for doctors in training of legislation and government policies, including medical education and training; vocational training programs; restrictions on the nature or location of medical practice; part-time and flexible postgraduate training; safe working hours, and workplace interaction with other health professionals.

As a member of the AMA, you are eligible to nominate for both your relevant state or territory and AMA Federal committee and councils.

Specialty training pathway guide:

With so many different medical specialties to choose from in Australia, making the decision to specialise in one can seem daunting.

To assist aspiring specialists, the AMA has developed our national Specialty Training Pathway Guide with input from the speciality Colleges. Use this guide to research particular specialties or compare the key attributes across specialties, such as entry requirements, cost and positions available.

Not sure what kind of doctor you want to be? Only available to AMA Members and AMA Student Members, can utilise our specialty training pathways guide to help inform your career decisions.

Professional development and careers:

Through AMA Victoria all AMA members have access to significantly discounted career, leadership, high-performance and professional development coaching, services and resources, delivered by a team of experienced and accredited coaches with extensive knowledge of the health sector and the career journey of a doctor.

Additionally, AMA Victoria's structured eight-month Mentoring Program supports doctors at all career stages after internship, with a particular focus on transition points. Whether you are seeking guidance or keen to share your experience, the program offers a rewarding opportunity to connect, reflect and grow with a peer in the profession.



Helpful contacts:

AMA: 1300 133 655 or memberservices@ama.com.au
Drs4Drs: 1300 374 377 or www.drs4drs.com.au/
Ahpra: 1300 419 495 or www.ahpra.gov.au/
CPD Home: 1800 273 466 or mycpd.cpdhome.org.au/

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