

17 May 2021

WA GP Training Advisory Councils Open Letter

We write to express our significant concerns regarding the current state of the transition to College-led training.

It is not news that Australia's General Practice system is already under immense pressure due to numerous factors, including COVID-19. The transition to College-led training will need to be thoroughly researched, carefully planned, and well-executed in a timely manner to minimise the risk of adding to that pressure and destabilising General Practice further.

While some would argue that General Practice training should be treated as separate from workforce supply, the reality in Western Australia is that GP registrars form a crucial part of the primary care workforce, some in our most vulnerable communities.

On 08 May 2021, a combined meeting of the WA Supervisor, Registrar and Practice Manager Advisory Councils met to discuss the forthcoming changes to GP training. These Councils comprise representatives from all regions in WA and meet regularly with WA's RTO, WAGPET, to provide feedback and guidance on the current GP training program. We acknowledge that there is room for improvement in GP training and embrace the transition as an opportunity to bring about appropriate change and ensure national consistency.

However, we have several concerns:

- The dearth of details of the training programs, with less than a year until applications open;
- The lack of consultation with registrars, supervisors and practices (the core of GP training);
- That centralisation will result in a loss of capacity for local context and support, especially in WA;
- That there will be an increase in administrative burden for practices and supervisors;
- That there will be a reduction in flexibility of training for registrars and practices;
- That there will be a reduction in already stretched funding for GP training;
- That the uncertainty regarding the transition will prompt some doctors to leave or delay entering the training program or becoming supervisors.

We identified the following needs and strategies to support a smoother transition:

- The Department of Health and Colleges seek feedback and collaborate with WAGPET, its practices, supervisors, and registrars to identify both the strengths of the current system to be preserved and built upon, as well as the weaknesses which can be used to drive change;
- WA's special needs due to population distribution and isolation, at the level of both the state and individual communities, continue to be considered and accommodated;
- High quality GP registrars and supervisors continue to be attracted and enrolled in GP training;
- Practices, supervisors and registrars continue to receive quality education, training and support uninterrupted, with a particular focus on maintaining local staff and existing experience;
- The details of the new education and training program and a clear plan for the actual transition be developed in a timely manner;

- Information about the plan be communicated clearly and well in advance of the actual transition;
- GP training continue to be a financially viable option for the registrars, supervisors, and practices;
- Assessment, administrative and placements processes be available to road-test and kept simple.

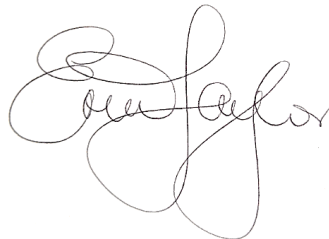
We, the Chairs of the three WA Advisory Councils, speak on behalf of practices, supervisors and registrars across WA. We also speak out of concern for a specialty already under significant strain, and those who are most vulnerable to disruption in general practice training and services, our patients.

We invite the Department of Health, RACGP, ACRRM, GPSA, GPRA to meet with us to hear more details of our concerns and work towards effective and sustainable GP training and subsequent workforce.

Yours sincerely



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Chair
Supervisor Advisory Council



Dr Erin O'Donnell-Taylor
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Registrar Advisory Council



Ms Raelene Tully
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