



MEDIA RELEASE
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Media Release on Budget initiatives 2009/10

General Practice Registrars Australia Ltd. (GPRA) welcomes a range of new initiatives in the 2009/2010 budget as it relates to supporting the future of the General Practice workforce in Australia.

EXPOSURE TO GENERAL PRACTICE SUPPORTED

GPRA commends the Australian Government for their budget outlay of an additional \$41.2 million across the next 4 years to support the expansion and consolidation of the Prevocational General Practice Placement Program (PGPPP).

Dr Belinda Guest Chair of GPRA stated: *"GPRA has advocated for an expansion of this important program because it provides junior doctors with exposure to General Practice as a medical specialty during the critical hospital years."*

"Our recent discussion paper explored some of the in-efficiencies of this program and we are delighted to see that the government has taken a bold step, which matches GPRA recommendations, to both strengthen this program with additional funding but also bring it within mainstream GP training by including it under the Australian General Practice Training Program."

INCREASED FLEXIBILITY FOR GP TRAINING

GPRA has made numerous submissions in the past to support increased flexibility for GP training. *"GPRA welcomes the federal government's commitment to encouraging uptake of General Practice training by allowing for more flexibility within the training program,"* Dr Guest said.

"We believe work in areas of need should be incentivised rather than mandated, as this is more likely to result in a positive experience in these areas."

The budget also outlines increased number of GP training positions over the next 5 years (675 in 2009, 700 in 2010, 812 in 2011, 2012 and 2013). Whilst falling short of projected increases in number of training places to meet future workforce shortages, (industry recommends 1200 GP training places by 2012), this is an important step in the right direction.

"GPRA welcomes this increase and recommends that the government revisit this in subsequent years to gradually increase the number of GP training places to match demand and workforce needs." Commented Dr Guest

REDUCED REGISTRAR INCENTIVES FOR RURAL TRAINING

A concerning change in the current federal budget is the discontinuation of the Registrar Rural incentives (RRIPS) program in favour of a new program GP RIPS.

“Whilst we commend the government’s resolve to bring rural incentive payments for both GP registrars and VR GPs in line with a common program, GPRA is concerned that the new program has significantly reduced rural incentives for GP registrars in the training program.”

“While the new system does provide better support for rewarding long term commitment to rural practice, the reduced incentives for Registrars along with reduced compulsory rural training present the very real threat of fewer Registrars choosing to work in rural areas, which is a great concern.”

“Not all Registrars are looking at long term rural careers and the new system greatly reduces incentives for those registrars who may have been considering a couple of years in a rural or remote setting”

“GPRA believes that the solution to the workforce shortage is to maintain flexibility while strengthening incentives for working and training in rural areas and areas of need. This will still ensure the attractiveness of General Practice as a career while incentivising work in rural and remote areas” noted Dr Guest

For more information or comment:

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