

18/02/2016

Rural Health West continues to support a sustainable, high-quality medical workforce in the Goldfields.

In response to a shortage of general practitioners in the Goldfields in recent years, Rural Health West, a not-for-profit organisation, assisted in recruiting a number of overseas trained doctors to the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Kambalda to support the health needs of the region.

The most recent data from Rural Health West shows that 54.7 per cent of currently practising rural general practitioners in Western Australia are overseas trained.

Overseas trained doctors are required to pass a number of examinations in order to meet strict Australian standards of general practice and achieve fellowship through either the Royal Australian College of General Practice or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine. Once a doctor has been recognised as a Fellow, they are able to work unsupervised in general practice and claim Medicare rebates that otherwise would have been unavailable to them.

Rural Health West provides support for doctors who are working towards their fellowship through the recently established Forward to Fellowship program. This program provides participants with clinical mentoring to aid in doctors' professional development and social assistance to encourage retention of the new workforce.

Now in its second year of operation, the first cohort of Forward to Fellowship members have recently completed their fellowship examinations, enabling them to become fully qualified medical specialists in their field of General Practice.

"The achievement of these medical practitioners is essential in establishing a sustainable medical workforce in the Goldfields," stated Ms Wendy Duncan, Chair of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Kambalda General Practice Steering Committee.

"The Rural Health West Forward to Fellowship Program has been instrumental in providing support to our local doctors, especially in administering local professional development and examination preparation courses that would alternatively have required the doctors to travel to Perth or Melbourne to complete."

The program includes a clinical mentorship component, led by Dr Phil Reid, in which Forward to Fellowship participants are able to consult with Medical Educators, who are accomplished general practitioners. Medical Educators are able to provide guidance with fellowship examination studies and assist with professional and practical training, resulting in a high quality, confident health workforce for the region. Local general practitioners Dr Christopher Iredia and Dr John Prempeh, are two Medical Educators who have given much of their valuable time to support those in the Forward to Fellowship program.

The Forward to Fellowship program is supported by key organisations in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region including State Members of Parliament, The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, the Shire of Coolgardie, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, the Kalgoorlie Hospital, the Chamber of Commerce and the Goldfields Midwest Medicare Local and will continue to provide services to doctors in the region who are working towards achieving their fellowship, ultimately improving the health and wellbeing of the local community.

ENDS

Media Invitation – Photo Opportunity:

Medical Educators and members of the Forward to Fellowship Program will be meeting on **Thursday 18 February 2016 from 6-6.30pm at The Rural Clinical School**, located at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, St Alban's Road, Kalgoorlie. Rural Health West would like to invite the Kalgoorlie Miner to attend for a photo opportunity. Dr Phil Reid and the participants of the program will be available at for a formal photograph and further comments.

Please advise if you are able to accept our invitation for a photo opportunity.

Media enquiries:

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As the leading rural health workforce agency for Western Australia, Rural Health West is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments responsible for the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled sustainable health workforce to meet the needs to rural and remote Western Australians communities.