

# Times of change and opportunity for Australian general practice training

James Brown

**WITH THE FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE** of the *Australian Journal of General Practice* on general practice training and education, it is opportune to reflect on the return of the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program to The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care resourcing to prepare for delivering the AGPT program provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to undertake the substantial work required to build the educational underpinnings of a robust training program. The transition itself was a resounding success because of the work of the regional teams who transitioned to the RACGP from the regional training providers and because of the ongoing commitment of our training practices and supervisors. We now see ourselves with enormous opportunity to build a nationally coordinated training program based on best evidence and fit for training the general practitioners (GPs) of the future.

The preparation for the return of the AGPT program began in earnest in 2020. Over the next three years, with funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care, work was undertaken to develop the educational frameworks and programs to support the delivery of training. During this period, the RACGP developed an educational framework,<sup>1</sup> a progressive capability profile which maps competencies against training milestones,<sup>2</sup> a training syllabus<sup>3</sup> and a training model. A supervisor professional development program and a framework for remote supervision<sup>4</sup> was built. A framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and health training was commenced; this has now been completed. Each of these projects was a substantial piece of work and was based on extensive review of the literature, national and international

best practice, and sector consultation. They provide strong foundations for the training program and its future.

It is now nearly two years since the RACGP's AGPT Program commenced. Despite working in a new environment and with systems that needed considerable refining, the local teams have delivered a training program that has returned high levels of registrar satisfaction<sup>5</sup> and has maintained the engagement of supervisors and practices. There is now a strong sense of working as one college with a level of collaboration and sharing that was not possible under multiple regional training organisations. A whole-of-country approach has enabled many registrars to undertake new placements in areas of general practice with high workforce needs. We have also seen an increase in interest in general practice training such that we are now oversubscribed for training places.

Now that the AGPT Program is bedded down, we are embarking on fashioning the program so that it is fit for the future. The program we are developing is a distributed program that puts the experience of registrars in supervised practice as the core. Registrars, supervisors and practices are supported by small local teams, who they know well, through multiple touch points. Out-of-practice education is in small, longitudinally stable groups that enable peer benchmarking and learner-centred education. We are building individualised case-managed training pipelines to support and enable registrars to work in areas of workforce need, and to support training sites in areas of need to provide high-quality training.

These are exciting times for general practice training and education under the RACGP and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM). As national programs, there is the ability to build a coherent pathway from medical student to Fellowed GP and rural generalist. There is the opportunity to bring national resources

to support local and regional training and to build new initiatives. There is the opportunity to build career pathways in medical education and to collaborate more closely with university departments of general practice. General practice is the cornerstone of primary care, and effective training and education is the cornerstone of general practice.

## Author

James Brown OAM, PhD, FRACGP, National Director of Training, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Melbourne, Vic; Adjunct Associate Professor, Monash Rural Health – Churchill, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University, Churchill, Vic

Competing interests: The author is employed as National Director of Training at RACGP. Part of the author's employment involves funding for work-related travel, meetings and conference attendance. The author receives payment from Trafalgar Medical Centre for work as a contract GP clinician and for supervision of registrars.

## References

1. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). RACGP educational framework. RACGP, 2023. Available at [www.racgp.org.au/education/registrars/fellowship-pathways/racgp-educational-framework/executive-summary](http://www.racgp.org.au/education/registrars/fellowship-pathways/racgp-educational-framework/executive-summary) [Accessed 13 October 2024].
2. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). Progressive capability profile of the general practitioner. RACGP, 2022. Available at [www.racgp.org.au/profile-of-a-gp](http://www.racgp.org.au/profile-of-a-gp) [Accessed 13 October 2024].
3. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). 2022 RACGP curriculum and syllabus for Australian general practice. RACGP, 2022. Available at [www.racgp.org.au/education/education-providers/curriculum/curriculum-and-syllabus/home](http://www.racgp.org.au/education/education-providers/curriculum/curriculum-and-syllabus/home) [Accessed 13 October 2024].
4. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). Guidelines for remote supervision: Introduction. RACGP, 2023. Available at [www.racgp.org.au/education/registrars/fellowship-pathways/policy-framework/handbooks-and-guides/remote-supervision/introduction](http://www.racgp.org.au/education/registrars/fellowship-pathways/policy-framework/handbooks-and-guides/remote-supervision/introduction) [Accessed 13 October 2024].
5. Taylor R, Clarke L, Hsien M. Australian General Practice Training Program: National Report on the 2023 National Registrar Survey. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, 2024. Available at [www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/agpt-program-national-report-on-the-2023-national-registrar-survey?language=e](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/agpt-program-national-report-on-the-2023-national-registrar-survey?language=e) [Accessed 13 October 2024].