

Why should you consider representation opportunities?

General practitioners (GPs) are by no means restricted to undertaking clinical work. You may choose to become involved in representation activities:

- to advocate for your patients
- to share your clinical expertise
- to increase your knowledge of government policy and advocacy
- to develop professional networks and connections
- because representation provides an alternative source of income.

GPs have much to offer in representative roles. You have specialist knowledge of primary care and an understanding of community health and funding models, enabling you to contribute to policy development through a unique generalist lens.

Leadership is a core skill identified in the [Curriculum for Australian General Practice 2016](#). There are numerous forms of leadership outlined in the curriculum, including advocating for issues to improve the health of the population and/or vulnerable groups within the community.

What types of representation roles are there?

You may be engaged as an RACGP representative or choose to pursue representation opportunities in your capacity as an individual GP or a member of another organisation.

Examples of representation roles include:

- Member of an RACGP Expert Committee (REC) or Working Group
- Primary Health Network (PHN) Board Director or member of a PHN Clinical Council
- Representative at meetings with government and other key stakeholders (eg hospitals, peak bodies, non-government organisations, public inquiries)
- Representative at stakeholder consultations (eg attending a roundtable or design workshop)
- Member of a research advisory committee

What should I consider when deciding whether to nominate for representative roles?

Time commitment

Many representation requests are received at short notice, which can be a barrier to getting involved. If possible, you should enquire about meeting dates, project timelines and workload well in advance of the start date.

Responsibilities and expectations

If you choose to participate in a representation activity, you should expect to be provided with clear advice regarding the purpose of the project/activity and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved. This will help to avoid any potential conflicts of interest due to vague advice on what a role involves. You should also clarify any confidentiality requirements before the role commences.

Remuneration

You should find out what level of remuneration is being offered when considering representation opportunities. Representatives should be paid in line with the level of expertise required of the role. As this time would otherwise be spent consulting with patients, most GPs are not in a position to volunteer their time without appropriate remuneration.

It is reasonable to expect to be paid for all time spent contributing your expertise in this way – not just during business hours.

Location

Geographic location shouldn't be a barrier to engaging in representation work. Find out if there are any allowances for travel or if you can attend meetings virtually. The requirement to socially distance as a result of COVID-19 has meant that more meetings are being held remotely (via videoconference or teleconference). Video applications such as Zoom and Skype have greatly minimised geographical barriers and made it easier than ever to connect.

Impact on general practice

You should consider how your representation activity will impact the scope and funding of general practice within the wider healthcare system. Ideally, there will be an opportunity for you to advance the role of GPs as healthcare stewards and the first point of contact for patients.

Undertaking representation work attracts CPD points

RACGP members can claim CPD points for activities such as participation in an RACGP Expert Committee or representing the RACGP at a meeting with a government department or agency, as well as activities external to the RACGP such as being a member of a PHN council or committee. These types of activities can be 'quick logged' on your CPD record, which you can access [here](#).

Further information

For more information on representation opportunities, get in touch with your [state faculty](#). You can also contact the Representatives and Endorsements Coordinator on 03 8699 0334 or via email at repsandendorsements@racgp.org.au.

The RACGP [Representatives' handbook](#) provides information on the role and responsibilities of being an RACGP representative.