

## Aims

The aim of this project is to explore barriers and enablers to the recruitment and retention of General Practitioners (GPs) in Tasmania by evaluating the current training pathway. The pathway consists of programs and initiatives from discrete organisations along the training continuum. Understanding how these elements connect and support medical learners is vital to the design of a cohesive pathway.

To investigate the effectiveness of the Tasmanian pathway, the proposed research questions are:

1. What is an integrated GP training pathway?
  - a. In what ways does it address barriers and enablers to GP workforce recruitment and retention?
2. How integrated is the training pathway to support the recruitment and retention of GP trainees and GPs in Tasmania?
  - a. Is the current Tasmanian pathway comparable to other similar pathways for GP training?
  - b. What features make such pathways effective and does the Tasmanian pathway share these?
  - c. How effective are the programs and initiatives currently in place to provide an integrated training pathway?
  - d. How do stakeholders (medical learners at each level of training, educational providers, recruitment agencies, and general practices) experience the integrated pathway?
  - e. What is currently effective and what could be improved?
3. How could the current pathway for GP training, recruitment and retention in Tasmania be improved by closer integration?
4. How could the lessons learnt be applied to other Australian contexts?

## Methods

This project utilised a mixed-methods approach to answer the research questions. Four distinct phases were completed, outlined in Table 1.

Phase	Approach	Working Group Members
<b>Phase 1: Review of the literature</b> <b>1.1 Scoping review</b> <b>1.2 Mapping existing GP training pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Systematic review, qualitative analysis</li><li>• Mapping exercise</li></ul>	Jacqueline Penney, Sarah Shepherd, Nara Jones, Sarvin Randhawa, Sandra Coe and Sarah Prior
<b>Phase 2: Stakeholder feedback</b> <b>2.1 Feedback from pathway users</b> <b>2.2 Feedback from supervisors and training organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stakeholder interviews (n = 18)</li><li>• Inductive thematic analysis of the findings</li></ul>	Sarah Shepherd, Jacqueline Penney, Bradley Williams, Lyndal Bond, Kathryn Ogden and Sarah Prior
<b>Phase 3: Evaluation Framework</b> <b>3.1 Develop principles for supporting GP pathway training</b> <b>3.2 Develop evaluation framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of pillars and principles for integrated pathways</li><li>• Development of initial evaluation framework for current Tasmanian GP/RG training pathways</li></ul>	Sarah Shepherd, Jacqueline Penney, Kathryn Ogden and Sarah Prior
<b>Phase 4: Pilot evaluation framework and rapid review of the literature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapid review to assess the challenges with GP/RG pathways</li><li>• Pilot online questionnaire with current stakeholders, quantitative analysis (n=12)</li></ul>	Sarah Shepherd, Jacqueline Penney, Kathryn Ogden, Lyndal Bond and Sarah Prior

- Recommendations and strategies for pathway improvements

## Results and Discussion

Trainees favour training pathways that allow for flexibility in course structure and offer multiple avenues for advanced specialist training. Common barriers and challenges to engaging with the GP training pathway were identified and included 3 pillars: professional aspects of GP careers, features of training support and trainee personal characteristics. Each facet involves complex bidirectional relationships between the trainee and professional and personal entities. From these pillars, twelve principles were developed that suggest support forms the backbone of integrated training pathways, and that the components of a supportive GP/RG training pathway can be monitored and assessed.

Learner-centred training focusses on flexibility and understanding within the context of learner's external commitments and values. There has been increasing emphasis recently on a paradigm shift from traditional teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred training in healthcare. Our findings demonstrate that trainees need to be considered and supported to learn in an integrated, connected way that decreased stress burden, a factor noted in prior research to negatively impact on trainee mental health and burnout. Post-vocational training opportunities and career advancement within GP/RG careers forms another part of a robust, integrated and supportive pathway. GP/RG trainees are more positive on entering a program knowing they will exit with a clear end point and be supported in employment options to the full scope of their training in the local areas that they train within, particularly for those following the RG stream.

Career planning begins early in prevocational and vocational training years, and as such integrated training pathways should overtly make clear the opportunities that becoming a VR GP or RG allow both locally and further abroad to attract trainees. In addition, those creating training pathways should advocate for local employment options for when trainees achieve VR, including job opportunities for those looking to apply their advanced skills. Opportunities for increased remuneration and recognition for VR GPs/RG and trainees was considered a core component of support that is consistent with the findings of prior studies. Substantial efforts have been made in Australia to expand GP training with a focus on regional areas. However, this significant monetary investment aimed to improve physical resourcing such as facilities, infrastructure and supervisor numbers rather than considering the subjective experiences of trainees and the experiential factors that may influence entry into, progression through and eventual graduation from the vocational training pathway. This project demonstrates that interventions to improve support within the pathway need to focus on all facets of GP/RG VR training including how to successfully embed a progressive, flexible and career-proud community of practice within a locally available integrated pipeline.

## Implications and Future Research

This research demonstrates that ongoing evaluation of GP training pathways is important to ensure a positive and valuable trainee experience. Evaluation should not only focus on the educative component of the pathway but also the support offered to trainees in various forms. This will contribute to improved recruitment and retention of GPs in regional areas. Utilising an evidence-based framework will provide consistency across pathways. Future research should focus on formally validating our evaluation framework, via questionnaire, to determine its applicability on a broader scale.