## Support system

PAUL HAYES

Dr Broomfield said the

Dr Ashlea Broomfield has dedicated much of her time in general practice to advocating for fellow registrars.

They say the good GP never stops learning. For Dr Ashlea Broomfield. recipient of the RACGP's 2015 General Practice Registrar of the Year Award, it was an early learning experience that saw her embrace general practice after considering physician training as a hospital-based specialist.

'When I first went into medicine I wanted to do general practice. That was my ideal,' she told Good Practice. 'But then I got a little bit carried away with the interest in the specialties and the hype and glamour associated with being a hospital-based specialist in a particular field. For a little while there I moved away from wanting to do general practice until I started doing my clinical year and experienced general practice.

'I noticed the difference between the trainees in specialty/hospital-based or FRACP [Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College Physicians] programs and the general practice trainees.

'I also did a PGPPP [Prevocational General Practice Placements Program] placement and realised that general practice was well supported, with good education and a lot of autonomy, and you're treated like an equal team member in the general practice environment. So I decided to go back down that route.'

## In training

Following medical studies at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney, Dr Broomfield moved to Coffs Harbour on the NSW north coast to attend the UNSW Rural Clinical School (RCS).

permanent move after Dr Broomfield's positive experiences at the Coffs Harbour Hospital and the RCS.

From there, Dr Broomfield's efforts in training and working on behalf of other registrars started to develop.

'I got on the GP training program with North Coast GP Training [NCGPT] and worked in Grafton, Woolgoolga and Toormina in NSW. Within the first couple of months of being a registrar I was asked to be the Registrar Liaison Officer [RLO] with NCGPT,' she said. 'I have now been working as an RLO for more than 12 months.

This RLO position with NCGPT sees Dr Broomfield work closely with doctors in training from all over Australia.

'Part of our role is to liaise with any registrars who are having issues in their practices and then advocate for them to their training provider or their practice,' she said. 'They come to us with a variety of issues.'

According to Dr Broomfield, some of those issues include remuneration, teaching methods, patient load, communication within their practice, personal issues, contracts, exam support and preparation, and more.

'We have a varied role which changes throughout the year depending on the needs of the registrars,' she said. 'There's a lot to learn initially, but after that it's a role that's nice to do because you've got a lot of people across the country who experience the same issues and it is good to be able to help them out by utilising the network of RLOs.'

Dr Broomfield was also named Chair of the General Practice Registrar Medical Educator Network (GPRMEN) earlier this year. A sub-committee of General Practice Registrars Australia, GPRMEN is designed to help registrars with a passion to teach,

supporting them in their roles within training providers.

'The GPRMEN is a committee that basically aims to promote positions as registered medical educators [RMEs] to general practice training providers and



make sure that's ongoing. Then to support RMEs through a variety of different ways - networking, educational events and general support with each other,' Dr Broomfield said.

## Online support

Her role as GPRMEN Chair also allows Dr Broomfield to further another of her interests in general practice, helping registrars and experienced GPs in the process.

'At the moment I am trying to move the GPRMEN a bit more onto online and social media platforms. Lots of medical educators are disconnected all over Australia so I'm trying to get them together so they can connect, interact and share resources,' she said.

'We also had a slot at the recent General Practice Training and Education Conference, where we talked about how best the GPRMEN network can support RMEs and new medical educators in their positions in terms of what they need for education and what the network might be able to do in regards to helping them.'

An active social media participant, Dr Broomfield understands the potential

advantages this ever-evolving medium offers healthcare professionals, particularly those in more isolated settings.

'A lot of GPs across Australia might work in solo practices or practices with only a few GPs. Or they might find that extra-curricular work they've got to do before or after work means they are just consulting in their own room then leaving for the day, which can be quite isolating,' she said. 'Social media provides a platform to get involved with other GPs and talk about issues related to the workplace or wellbeing, and to get support from other doctors.

'It also allows you to see any new or updated information, as well as a variety of different information options.

'Lots of GPs have varied levels of special interest and varying degrees of expertise in different areas, so in interactive forums where you can discuss cases you get a lot of input from people who are experts in their field and get up-to-date information on assessment, diagnosis and management.'

Dr Broomfield's digital expertise has also been put to use in her role at NCGPT, where she helped develop an online resource for fellow registrars.

'As part of my role as an RLO at NCGPT I was asked to be involved in setting up the resource area on their online learning platform, so I used all the resources I already had stored on my own computer to update them,' she said. 'All of those resources were uploaded to the "Resources for registrars" section of NCGPT's online learning platform.'

Dr Broomfield is honoured, if admittedly a little surprised, to be named the RACGP's 2015 General Practice Registrar of the Year.

'I am very humbled to win the award and was very honoured by the people from my regional training provider who put forward the nomination for me,' she said.

'There are so many doctors and registrars out there who do so much for their community and medicine in general, and for education and the promotion of general practice. I'm inspired by other people around me and that's why I do a lot of the work I do, because of so many inspirational people I've seen in general practice.

'It's so nice to be given this award but, at the same time, there's so many other people out there who are doing so much good work. I wish I could give the award to all those people as well.'