

Dr Anne Sheila Fisher (nee Crabtree)

MBBS, FRACGP

16 October 1930 – 24 February 2021

A compassionate pioneer

Anne Fisher had two big loves in her life: family and medicine.

She was always modest about her achievements, even though many would regard her as a pioneer. She was in the second intake of women into medicine at London University in 1949. After only two years' practice in hospitals in England, she immigrated to Australia with her new husband, Eric, to work in general practice in his hometown of West Wyalong in rural New South Wales.

Working in an isolated country town prior to the introduction of the Air Ambulance, when the nearest specialists were located some 160 km away by road, meant that Anne had to respond to all manner of emergencies: delivering babies, responding to motor vehicle accidents, acting as anaesthetist and surgeon, and diagnosing and treating chronic illnesses and infectious diseases. Through it all, Anne was a conscientious and compassionate doctor.

In the mid-1960s, she and Eric attended a series of workshops that led them to challenge their approach to healthcare. At Anne's instigation, they both introduced counselling into their medical practice. She could see the benefits of empathy and understanding as a way of helping patients realise that stress and emotional upset was possibly the cause of their ill health.

As well as being a compassionate doctor, Anne was also a wife and mother. She believed that her ability to create a loving family was really her greatest achievement. Eric credited Anne with not only teaching him about patient care but also providing the security that allowed him to be involved in community and professional organisations. Against this backdrop,



Anne and Eric Fisher.

she often underplayed her value as a role model, balancing a full-time career while raising four children.

Anne's contributions to the RACGP included working as the college representative on the Ministers' Advisory Council on Cervical Screening (1988–90). She was also a committee member of the Medical Women's Society of NSW (1982–89) and Warrangah Medical District Association (1984–85).

After more than 40 years in medical practice, Anne retired at the age of 67. She devoted her time to volunteer work, family and enjoying the arts.

Anne died on 24 February 2021 and is survived by her four children, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

By Jenny Fisher (Anne's daughter)

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