

Media Release

29 April 2021



Unique training program key to recruitment of extra doctor for St George

A unique national GP training program that enables doctors to gain their specialist qualification in General Practice – while living and working as a doctor in a First Nations, rural or remote community – has assisted the recruitment of an additional much-needed doctor for St George in Queensland.

And thanks to additional Federal Government funding, a key element of the program is being expanded to recruit more doctors to communities with significant medical workforce shortages.

Dr Gary Wood is among 32 doctors who will be training with the Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) this year.

Funded by the Australian Government, RVTS delivers General Practice and Rural Generalist training for medical practitioners in First Nations, rural and remote communities throughout Australia.

Dr Wood was recruited under a collaborative approach by RVTS (through its Targeted Recruitment strategy), Health Workforce Queensland and Goondir Health Services.

He will be working at Goondir Health Services – a health service for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – while continuing his specialist GP training in the RVTS program.

The appointment is a major win for the St George community, as Dr Wood will work there for the duration of his specialist GP training, and hopefully for many years beyond.

“It is great to hear that Dr Wood has settled well into life in St George” **RVTS CEO, Dr Pat Giddings, said.** “He comes from a strong background in paediatric medicine, and has found general practice in St George to be interesting and rewarding.

“The benefit of the RVTS program is that our doctors don’t need to leave their community to undertake their specialist GP training. They can access the latest evidence-based learning – and the latest advances in rural general practice – via intensive workshops, online training, webinars and regular interaction with experts in the field...all without having to move to another centre.

“For their community, this means continuity of medical services and patient care.

“It really is a win-win situation for the doctors and their communities.”

While the original aim of RVTS was to *keep* doctors in their communities by providing them with access to its remote training program, the Targeted Recruitment strategy (under which Dr Wood has been recruited) comes at it from another angle – offering access to the RVTS program as an additional incentive for a doctor to *move to* a community where medical workforce need is high.

Since the first appointment under its Targeted Recruitment pilot in 2018, RVTS has assisted the recruitment of 15 doctors to locations with high medical workforce need across Australia, supporting 20 communities including five Aboriginal Medical Services.

“Our efforts to build on this success will be bolstered by the Federal Government’s recent announcement of additional funding to expand our Targeted Recruitment pilot to more locations” **Dr Giddings said.** “We strongly welcome this additional funding for what has become a very successful program in delivering rural doctors to more communities.

“It has been very productive working with Health Workforce Queensland and Goondir Health Services to secure Dr Wood’s placement.

“Through ongoing collaboration with rural health workforce agencies like Health Workforce Queensland, we aim to secure better access to doctors for those living in the bush.”

RVTS has specialised in supporting doctors training in rural and remote communities for more than 20 years. In that time, it has supported 400 doctors who have delivered primary health care in more than 300 rural, remote and First Nations communities.

Dr Wood said the benefits of working and training as a doctor under the RVTS training model were significant.

“I chose St George because I wanted somewhere familiar (this is my mum’s hometown) and because I saw a great opportunity to work in rural/remote Aboriginal health and gain Fellowship with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)” he said.

“I chose RVTS because I have spent the past 11 years of my study and training moving from place to place constantly and never really having a place I could call home – but I have found that here in St George and, whilst it was a gamble, I am very glad I made the jump from big city medicine to small town GP life.

“Every day there is something new and I am actually using the things I have learned over the years, rather than just having them as theoretical concepts. The RVTS team has had my back every step of the way and whilst studying remotely has its own challenges, I am very thankful the program exists.”

Ends

Media enquiries and interviews:

RVTS CEO, Dr Pat Giddings

M: 0408 573 955

P: (02) 6057 3400

A photo of Dr Patrick Giddings is available [here](#).

A photo of Dr Gary Wood (left) with the CEO of Goondir Health Services, Floyd Leedie (right), is available [here](#).

RVTS is fully funded by the Australian Government.

Further information is available at www.rvts.org.au