

23rd November 2017

To: Ms Robyn Kruk AM
Chair, Sustainable Health Review Panel
SHR@health.wa.gov.au

Dear Ms Kruk

Re: Growing the generalist workforce for rural and regional WA

This letter is written by the Western Australian Rural Physicians' Network (RPN) – a collegiate group created with the support of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and inclusive of all the specialist adult medicine Physicians working in rural and regional WA. We had our annual meeting in Perth on the 18th and 19th of November 2017 and used the time together to review several areas of shared concern.

We felt that it was important to highlight three issues to the Panel and offer our involvement if more conversations are requested.

These issues include:

1. The current and projected future deficit in the WA rural General Physician workforce and the impact this will have on providing high quality specialist care to hospital and community patients with undiagnosed illness, complex illness and multi-morbidity. Generalist models of health care are recognised as providing the most cost effective quality health outcomes across populations.
2. The requirement for robust training networks across regional hospitals in WACHS linked with sub-speciality rotations in metropolitan services to prepare trainees for practice as rural General Physicians.
3. The requirement for a fresh approach to recruiting junior doctors to rural training positions, supporting them in career planning and mentoring through to Fellowship and their early career years.

A group of rural physicians from the RPN will continue to work on the training-related issues over 2018-2019, in conjunction with HDWA Medical Workforce, the College, the Rural Clinical School of WA, WACHS, the metropolitan area health services and trainees themselves. We would be very happy to engage with the Sustainable Health Review Panel if there is overlap in our efforts.

Yours sincerely



Assoc Prof Kirsten Auret on behalf of Heads of Departments of Medicine - Dr Peter Kendall (Great Southern), Dr Sean George (Goldfields), Dr Patrick Cox (South West), Dr Roy Varghese (Mid West), Dr Malcolm Clarke (Pilbara) and Dr Lydia Scott (Kimberley) and Dr Tony Mylius (Wheat belt, rural representative on the RACP State Committee)