

MEDIA RELEASE

The importance of primary healthcare

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Given the importance of general practitioners to the health of local communities, it is not surprising that general practice and primary healthcare are seldom out of the news these days.

Keeping people healthy, well and out of hospital is the cornerstone of general practice, but in rural and regional areas like ours, GP clinics are finding it difficult to offer all the appointments that community members need.

Increasingly, patients are being offered multidisciplinary primary healthcare, where teams of medical professionals can provide people – particularly those with chronic diseases – the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

It has also never been more challenging to encourage young medical students to consider general practice as a speciality, even though it is one area of specialty that allows regional and rural medical students to work close to where they live, and to achieve a greater work/life balance.

Murray PHN's 2023 *Murray Health Report: The importance of primary healthcare*, looks at some of the ways we are working with general practice and health services to support existing GPs and other primary healthcare clinicians in our regional and rural setting. At the same time, we are supporting the piloting of innovative solutions that can help attract – and retain – more clinicians to our region.

The Murray Health Report, which can be found [here](#), also looks at our work in understanding the needs of each of our GP catchments, to help prioritise the workforce needs from place to place. We also look at the paths to becoming a general practitioner, where in our region that training takes place, and how our complex health system is funded.

Earlier this week, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners issued its 2023 Health of the Nation report, which spoke of the growing sense of stress and burnout experienced by general practitioners and the need for continued and sustained policy reform to support them.

Matt Jones, CEO of Murray PHN, said it had never been more timely to recognise the important work of general practice in our primary healthcare system, and the need to find ways to support our medical professionals to work in satisfying and sustainable jobs.

“General practice requires significant support, including collaboration between all levels of government and health services, in order for it to succeed.”

Among other findings, the [RACGP report](#) noted that GP funding was a significant and ongoing issue, with 81 per cent of salaried GPs in 2022 and 2023 reporting moderate to high job satisfaction, versus 66 per cent of GPs who were paid through a proportion of their billings.

“For those of us working in rural and regional areas, it is clear that we need a more tailored and nuanced models of general practice funding,” Mr Jones said.

“Instead of simple fee-for-service funding models, we need long-term planning and support for communities to grow their own workforce and build systems and structures that provide high-quality healthcare as close to home as possible.”



Imagery

- Cover imagery

Contact details

Additional comments from Matt Jones can be found on page 3 of the Murray Health Report.

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