

Medical Practitioner Workforce Plan for Queensland (MPWP4Q)

High level summary of initiatives and achievements

In 2017, the Department of Health publicly released the *Medical Practitioner Workforce Plan for Queensland* (MPWP4Q), demonstrating the Queensland Government's investment and commitment to supporting the medical workforce. The 10-year plan outlines key initiatives and deliverables aimed at building, strengthening and growing Queensland's medical workforce to reflect the health needs of local communities and the changing demographics of Queensland's population.

Since the release of the MPWP4Q in 2017, funding of approximately \$5 million per annum has been committed to a broad range of initiatives designed to address medical workforce challenges primarily associated with the maldistribution of the workforce, both geographically and in terms of specialties in undersupply.

The MPWP4Q identifies the following high level strategic priorities and initiatives for action:

- Emergent priority areas
- Shared data collection and analysis
- Strengthening the primary care medical workforce
- Support for the next generation
- Securing a medical workforce to deliver services to regional and rural communities
- Enabling sustainability
- Fostering the health and wellbeing of the medical workforce

Current initiatives (2023-2027) – Phase 3

The Department invited applications for new initiatives to be funded and implemented over the next four financial years (2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27) which focus on addressing medical workforce challenges in Queensland.

This process was open to both internal and external stakeholders including all Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) and medical specialist colleges.

The response to this opportunity was considerable with the Department receiving 53 applications totalling approximately \$84 million in requested funding.

After a competitive evaluation process undertaken by an independent funding assessment committee, the following ten initiatives were selected for funding in the first instance.

Organisation	Initiative
Australasian College of Dermatologists	Building a networked specialist dermatology training hub and rural transition pathway in Northern Queensland.
Cairns and Hinterland HHS	Enhancing the rural generalist medical workforce by the temporary establishment of four intern positions at Innisfail Hospital.
Central Queensland HHS	Establishment of an addiction psychiatry registrar to enable a sustainable addiction psychiatry workforce in the Gladstone region.
Central West HHS	Upskilling of rural generalists with anaesthetics advanced skills to help recruit and retain a permanent rural medical workforce.
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health	Paediatric registrar community-based training placement to create a sustainable pipeline of paediatric specialists with skills and experience in both a community setting and in providing culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
Office of Rural and Remote Health	Single Employer Model Pilot Project to enable more general practice and rural generalist registrars training in regional, rural and remote communities to maintain the benefits of being employed by one employer, including accrual of leave entitlements.
Pathology Queensland	Establishment of two part-time training positions for non-genetic pathologists (e.g. anatomical pathologists, haematologists) to undertake training in genomics relevant to their discipline to help alleviate the shortage of genetic pathologists.
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners	Queensland First Nations Research Project into the performance of existing pipelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohorts to undertake general practice training with the goal of increasing numbers of First Nations GPs.

Organisation	Initiative
Townsville HHS	North Queensland International Medical Graduates (IMGs) Preparation Program – an IMG readiness program to better equip and support IMGs for entry into Australia.
West Moreton HHS	West Moreton Rural Medical Pathway – the creation of a dedicated rural medical education and research team to strengthen and expand on existing rural medical training structures within West Moreton rural communities.

Significant funding investments also continue to be made to implement the following initiatives:

Initiative	
Central Queensland and Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway	In partnership with the University of Queensland and CQUniversity, development of an end-to-end pathway for the education and training of future regional, rural and remote doctors to address workforce shortages in the Central Queensland and Wide Bay regions. The medical program commenced in 2023 with an initial cohort of 60 students in Bundaberg/Hervey Bay and Rockhampton.
Darling Downs and South West Medical Pathway	In partnership with the University of Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland, development of an end-to-end pathway for the education and training of future regional, rural and remote doctors, designed to establish long-term careers in the Darling Downs and South West regions. The medical program commenced in 2024 with an initial cohort of 30 students in Toowoomba.
Mind(re)set program	Development of the Mind(re)set online wellbeing education and training program for junior doctors. The modules, developed in collaboration with Mater Education Limited and subject matter experts, provide strategies for mental health wellbeing and burnout mitigation, practising self-care and managing workload stress.

Previous initiatives (2017-2022) – Phase 1 and 2

A review was undertaken at the halfway point of the 10-year plan.

A short overview of each initiative from 2017 to 2022, and its outcomes in addressing medical workforce challenges across Queensland, is provided in the following table.

Strategic priorities	Key achievements
<p>Emergent priority areas</p> <p><i>Investing in and supporting specialist workforces that are currently in, or at risk of, shortage.</i></p>	<p>Investment in training and practice capacity in identified specialties including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction medicine (3 FTE registrar positions over 2 years) • Anatomical pathology (2 FTE registrar positions over 2 years) • Public health medicine (2 FTE registrar positions over 4.5 years) • Psychiatry (1.5 FTE Director of Training in Psychiatry positions over 4.5 years, 1 FTE over 2.5 years) • Development of an eLearning resource in partnership with Insight on addiction medicine training <p>Facilitate enrolment through specialty core requirements by expanding capacity in the following rotations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paediatric anaesthesia (1 FTE registrar over 3 years) • Paediatric radiology (1 FTE registrar over 3 years)
<p>Shared data collection and analysis</p> <p><i>Enhanced collaboration to enable shared identification and understanding of challenges that will need to be addressed by multi-faceted solutions.</i></p>	<p>Establishment of the Queensland Health Medical Specialist Colleges Virtual Forum.</p> <p>Continuation of the Medical Schools Liaison Committee.</p> <p>Collaboration with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions in relation to the development of the <i>National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021 – 2031</i>.</p>

Strategic priorities	Key achievements
<p>Strengthening the primary care medical workforce</p> <p><i>Supporting an appropriately skilled and distributed general practice workforce to meet Queensland's primary health care needs, particularly in rural and remote areas.</i></p>	<p>Implementation of the Rural Doctors Upskilling Program (RDUP) to support the development and maintenance of a skilled general practice and rural generalist workforce to meet the medical service needs of regional, rural and remote Queensland.</p> <p>RDUP has been run over three rounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017-2018 – Round 1 – 15 applicants • 2018-2019 – Round 2 – 6 applicants • 2019-2020 – Round 3 – 30 applicants <p>Applicants undertook upskilling predominantly in obstetrics, emergency, mental health and anaesthetics across Queensland.</p>
<p>Support for the next generation</p> <p><i>Promote career options early and encourage graduates and junior doctors into specialties and locations where there is need.</i></p>	<p>Development of the Medi-Nav medical careers website containing detailed workforce information and comparative capabilities for medical students and junior doctors.</p> <p>Launched on 7 June 2019, the site attracted over 57,042 users and over 380,767 page views as at 16 February 2024.</p>
<p>Securing a medical workforce to deliver services to regional and rural communities</p> <p><i>Despite significant increases in the medical workforce, shortages in current and projected staffing requirements continue to have a proportionately greater impact on regional, rural and remote health services.</i></p>	<p>Funding investments in two new regional medical pathways to produce home grown doctors and expand training capacity in regional, rural and remote communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Queensland and Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway • Darling Downs and South West Medical Pathway <p>Establishment of an employment pathway for rural generalists with advanced skills training in mental health in rural and remote communities.</p> <p>Implementation of a Regional Post Fellowship Scheme to support placements for new fellows in regional, rural and remote settings.</p>
<p>Enabling sustainability</p> <p><i>Investment in Queensland's future medical leaders.</i></p>	<p>Expansion of leadership programs to support the professional development of current and potential medical managers, leaders and supervisors.</p>

Strategic priorities

Fostering the health and wellbeing of our medical workforce

Supporting the medical practitioner workforce via the targeted initiatives or interventions which address wellbeing issues and promote cultural change.

Key achievements

Delivery of the *Wellbeing at Work* program (formerly known as *Resilience on the Run*) to all medical interns across the state.

3,989 interns attended 137 sessions of the program from July 2017 to December 2021.

Establishment of the Queensland Health Medical Workforce Wellbeing Reference Group.