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## MEDIA RELEASE

17 September 2024

Interviews: ☎ 03 8699 0992 ✉ [media@racgp.org.au](mailto:media@racgp.org.au)

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### RACGP questions readiness of fast pathway for overseas GPs

Just weeks ahead of the planned launch of an expedited pathway seeking to approve overseas trained GPs to work in Australia, the Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) has said it has concerns about the program's readiness.

The Medical Board of Australia [announced the expedited pathway](#) for overseas-trained GPs, anaesthetists, obstetricians and gynaecologists, and psychiatrists in late April. With the program planned to commence in October, the RACGP has concerns about the program's readiness and the impact it may have on existing expedited pathways.

RACGP President Dr Nicole Higgins said the Board must listen to the medical colleges' concerns about patient safety.

"We have raised our concerns with the Medical Board and health ministers about whether the Board is ready to launch an expedited pathway," she said.

"We work with the Board continuously, and for there to be so many known unknowns is extraordinary.

"As things stand, this process relies on a paper-based suitability assessment, whereas we and other colleges have fast-tracked our processes for overseas-trained specialists while keeping the rigour and standards our patients expect.

"The deeper concerns though are about what we don't know. The Board must have appropriate systems, processes, and resources available to ensure the new pathway truly 'expedites' the process. We have yet to see evidence of this.

"We have been clear that if this is to happen so soon, only GPs with training in contexts most similar to Australia should qualify – the UK, New Zealand, and Ireland – but we have not been informed what qualifications will be eligible. This isn't about which countries are 'best', it's about which practitioners will be able to practice safely in an Australian context from day one. Australia is a different context with different systems to the US and Canada, for example.

"We have yet to hear how supervision will be guaranteed, particularly in a rural context. We have been told there will be a six-month supervision process under an expert Australian GP, but we have yet to hear what that supervisor will be monitoring, and what will be measured and how. We don't even know what is supposed to happen when a practitioner is approved to come and start practicing in Australia under supervision, but is found to be unsuitable for the program.

"That's deeply concerning. The fact we still don't know the answers to these questions makes us question if they're ready for a process that's supposed to start in weeks. If this is going to start so soon, it needs to be with a cautious rollout. Anything more would reflect a recklessness we do not expect and have not experienced from the Board and Ahpra."

Dr Higgins also called on the Government to boost the general practice workforce through domestic general practice training and by supporting existing pathways for safe and fast processing for overseas-trained GPs.

"The RACGP has already fast tracked its processes, and we now assess and approve internationally trained GPs significantly faster, while ensuring these GPs are ready to practice in the Australian context under expert GP supervision," she said.

"That's just one reason why the Government should reinstate funding for [programs that support](#) overseas-trained specialist GPs to gain registration to practice in Australia, as [we called for](#) in the 2024 Federal Budget. This would remove a barrier holding international specialist GPs back from entering the Australian workforce.

"The Government must also support the training of more GPs here. Ensuring Australian doctors training as GPs [have the same remuneration as other specialists in training](#) would make a big difference in incentivising them to train as GPs."

~ENDS

RACGP spokespeople are available for interviews: [03 8699 0992](tel:0386990992) / [media@racgp.org.au](mailto:media@racgp.org.au).

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## Media contacts

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## About the RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is the peak representative organisation for general practice, the backbone of Australia's health system. We set the standards for general practice, facilitate lifelong learning for GPs, connect the general practice community, and advocate for better health and wellbeing for all Australians.

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