
MEDIA RELEASE

21 September 2024

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Forty new specialist GPs gain Fellowship in Tasmania

The Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) welcomed 40 new fellows as specialist GPs at a fellowship ceremony in Hobart on 21 September.

[Fellowship of the RACGP \(FRACGP\)](#) reflects a doctor's qualification and expertise as a specialist GP, following 11 years or longer in higher education, training, rigorous assessment, and experience in primary care. The new GPs include four rural generalists, rural-focused GPs, who completed additional training in obstetrics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, emergency medicine, and child health.

The following GPs also include two married couples and two brothers, Dr Charles and Edward Rose. Dr Edward Rose travelled to Tasmania from NSW to fellow at the same ceremony as his Hobart-based brother Charles, with their Launceston-based general practitioner parents in the audience.

RACGP Vice President and Rural Chair Associate Professor Michael Clements congratulated the new fellows.

"Australia needs more specialist GPs, and Tasmania more so than other states," he said.

"With a higher burden of chronic disease than other states and an ageing population, the GPs following today and those who will follow them could not be more essential to the future of the state. The fact is, if patients cannot access a local GP who knows them and their medical history, communities become unsustainable. The rural barriers to health become too high, and there's no other type of health support that can offer a substitute for the care of a GP.

"I'm honoured to be here to represent the body which trains 90% of Australia's GPs as we deliver for Tasmania. And I'm exceptionally proud to welcome such a large cohort of GPs, who will serve Tasmania for decades to come.

"Credit for this success should also go to our colleagues at the University of Tasmania, where we're meeting today. Our data shows the university is truly leading the class in training doctors who become GPs. This is what Australia needs, and this is increasingly where funding is focused. Other Australian medical schools can learn from their success."

RACGP Tasmania Chair Dr Toby Gardner joined Associate Professor Clements in welcoming the new specialist GPs.

"Being a GP is such a rewarding career. It's a genuine privilege keeping our patients healthy over their lifetime," he said.

"Tasmania is a great place to work and practice, but we face the extra challenge of competing with the bigger states. Tasmania only has around 106 GPs per 100,000 people, well below the national average of 119.

"Governments must deliver long-term, holistic solutions to the workforce issues facing our state, not makeshift fixes. I'm proud to have moved to Tasmania, and the state needs to make it more appealing for doctors to move here, as well as do all it can to support our junior doctors to train as GPs. GPs like those following today are essential for Tasmania.

"General practice care helps people stay healthy and out of hospital. There's no substitute for a GP in the community."

Longford-based GP Dr Tim Flannagan gave the Fellowship oration, and three dedicated GPs and an outstanding practice were recognised in with state awards.

Dr Emil Djakic, an Ulverstone GP and the Deputy Chair of the [RACGP Expert Committee – Funding and Health System Reform](#), was named Tasmanian General Practitioner of the Year, and also received Life Membership of the RACGP.

"As a child in Launceston from a non-medical family, my view of the health system was *Casualty* and our family doctor, Dr Stewart – I think my image of a real doctor was his influence," Dr Djakic said.

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“Serving patients at an individual level has been rewarding, but serving the system through the Divisions Network and now the RACGP has been critical. Underinvestment in general practice by successive governments is inevitably leading to structural failures in health. Health needs investment to keep the system running, like any large piece of infrastructure.

“It’s either short-termism to chase a ‘productivity dividend’, or a belief non-GP providers can deliver good-enough outcomes at lower cost. But [research by the late Barbara Starfield](#) established high-functioning and cost-efficient health systems around the world are centred around general practice. It’s a challenge, but I’m passionate about showing funders GPs are the way to deliver a healthy, happy, and productive population at a bargain price. It’s vital work.”

Tasmanian General Practice Supervisor of the Year was awarded to Dr Diane Hintum at Summerdale Medical Centre, who takes an active role in supporting and mentoring her GPs in training and setting them up to succeed.

“GPs in training need to be supported by a practice structure and culture that affords them enough time for themselves and their families, and ready access to colleagues to allow them to be confident and caring GPs of the future,” she said.

“Young doctors coming from the hospital system are often put off general practice by the similar level of complexity of the work we do, but the poor remuneration compared to our hospital-based peers. The government should provide better incentive payments to doctors working in general practice, particularly in regional and rural areas – essentially the whole of Tasmania – and better fund access to GPs for patients through improved Medicare rebates.”

The Award for Tasmanian General Practice of the Year went to [Beaconsfield Family Medical Practice](#), led by practice principal Dr Prashanth Reddy Gangapuram, who [took over the practice in early 2023](#). Initially with Dr Reddy, as he’s known to his patients, was a solo GP, but he has grown the practice into a comprehensive healthcare hub, with four full-time GPs and integrated allied health services.

Tasmania’s General Practitioner in Training of the Year Dr James Tan said his award affirmed he was on the right path: “This award gives me positive affirmation that I’m on the correct path on my journey to be a GP and to continue striving for the best for myself and my patients.”

~ENDS

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

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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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