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Strong start to the year for GP recruitment

There has been a strong start to the recruitment of GPs into rural and remote Western Australian communities this financial year, according to rural health workforce agency, Rural Health West.

So far this financial year, Rural Health West has successfully filled 19 GP vacancies compared with 8 this time last year.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer Tim Shackleton said new GPs had been recruited across all the State's regional health regions with six new GPs in the South-West, four in the Wheatbelt and three in the Pilbara.

"We are particularly pleased with the successful recruitment of the four new GPs for the Wheatbelt because last year we saw a contraction in the number of GPs servicing the region," he said.

"What is also pleasing is that six of the new GP placements were in high priority areas.

"We believe that the uptick in recruitment is being driven by the end of the COVID pandemic and increased confidence in interstate and international travel and migration."

Mr Shackleton said 16 of the new placements were International Medical Graduates (IMG) which make up about half of the 911 GPs working in rural and remote Western Australia.

"International Medical Graduates are crucial to the supply of GPs in rural and remote communities right throughout Australia and they stay resident in communities for an extended period which is so important for continuity of care," he said.

Mr Shackleton said that according to the agency's last Rural General Practice Workforce Update, there were 143 vocationally registered IMGs who had been in rural WA for 10 years or more.

He said that 18 of the new GPs were being employed by established group practices and there was one solo practitioner.

"While our results so far this financial year are promising, there are still 90 GP vacancies throughout regional Western Australia that need to be filled" he said.

"Our recruitment efforts will continue to focus on finding GPs in regions we have identified as priorities for primary health care services."

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Rural Health West aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health.