

MEDIA RELEASE

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Better retention helping strengthen Kimberley GP workforce

New data shows the Kimberley's rural GP workforce has remained stable.

The latest *Rural General Practice in Western Australia: Annual Workforce Update* shows 112 GPs were practising across the Kimberley at 30 November 2025, broadly consistent with the previous year.

GP turnover remained steady at 18.8 per cent between November 2024 and November 2025, consistent with the previous reporting period. It was substantially lower than the peak of 28.4 per cent recorded in 2021.

Rural Health West CEO Professor Catherine Elliott said the data highlighted the resilience of the health workforce serving one of Australia's most remote regions.

"This is an encouraging sign that workforce retention in the Kimberley is improving, and the workforce is becoming more stable," Professor Elliott said.

"But maintaining that stability requires ongoing investment and support."

While retaining doctors in one of Australia's most remote regions continues to present challenges, the longer-term trend suggests sustained efforts to support and retain the workforce are making a positive difference.

"The Kimberley presents some of the most complex workforce challenges anywhere in Australia," Professor Elliott said.

"Communities are spread across vast distances, healthcare needs are significant, and attracting and retaining health professionals requires more than simply recruiting doctors."

Professor Elliott said workforce retention continued to be a major focus for Rural Health West and the broader health sector.

"Retention is ultimately about ensuring health professionals feel connected, supported and able to build a life in the communities where they work," she said.

The Rural Health West-led Kimberley Health Professionals Network (KHPN) supports retention by uniting doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other healthcare workers through networking, education and professional development opportunities.

With more than 950 members, the KHPN plays an important role in reducing professional isolation and strengthening connections across the region's health workforce.

"Working in a remote community can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be professionally and personally challenging," Professor Elliott said.

"Creating opportunities for health professionals to connect with colleagues, access education and build support networks helps strengthen workforce wellbeing and retention."

Professor Elliott said that while housing was not traditionally viewed as a health workforce issue, it was increasingly becoming one.

"Housing availability and affordability are being identified as barriers to workforce attraction and retention across regional WA, particularly in the Kimberley," she said.

"It is one of the issues we continue to hear from health professionals and employers. Limited housing availability makes it difficult to recruit new staff, while rising housing costs can influence decisions about whether people remain in a community long term."

Professor Elliott said to address rural workforce challenges, a coordinated approach across all levels of government and the health sector was required.

"Our role is to continue advocating for the conditions that enable health professionals to stay – whether that is workforce support, professional development, housing, training opportunities or community connections," Professor Elliott said.

"Strong rural communities depend on access to healthcare and maintaining that access requires ongoing attention to the factors that influence workforce sustainability."

Rural Health West has been publishing a GP workforce report for 25 years. It is one of the most comprehensive annual analyses of the state's rural GP workforce and supports workforce planning, policy development and advocacy across regional Western Australia.

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Media Notes:

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, Disability and Ageing.