

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Midwest workforce grows, but sustainability challenges remain for smaller communities**

The Midwest's rural GP workforce has continued to grow, but the latest workforce data highlights the very different realities facing larger regional centres and smaller rural communities.

Rural Health West's latest *Rural General Practice in Western Australia: Annual Workforce Update* shows the number of GPs practising in the Midwest increased slightly from 105 to 109 between November 2024 and November 2025.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer Professor Catherine Elliott said the figures reflected positive workforce growth, particularly in Geraldton.

"The Midwest continues to demonstrate many of the strengths that make regional Western Australia an attractive place for health professionals to live and work," Professor Elliott said.

"Geraldton has developed into a significant regional centre with strong healthcare infrastructure, larger practices and growing opportunities for professional collaboration, which all support workforce attraction and retention."

However, the latest data also highlights an interesting contrast within the region.

Data revealed 45.7 per cent of Midwest GPs had worked in their current practice for more than five years and a further 47.8 per cent had been in place between one and five years during the reporting period.

Despite this, the region recorded GP turnover of 19 per cent - the highest of any country WA region.

"Those figures tell us there is a stable core workforce across the region, but they also highlight how vulnerable some smaller communities can be when even one doctor leaves," Professor Elliott said.

Recent events have illustrated that fragility. The impending closure of Kalbarri Doctors Surgery and the temporary closure of Northampton Medical Centre in 2025 demonstrate how quickly access to primary care can be disrupted when small practices face workforce or financial pressures.

"Many communities are working incredibly hard to retain local healthcare services, but we continue to hear concerns about the viability of the traditional general practice business model in some locations," she said.

"Medicare plays a critical role in funding primary care, but it was not designed with many of today's small rural communities in mind."

Rural Health West recently contributed to the [Senate Inquiry into Rural, Regional and Remote Medicare Access and Funding](#), highlighting the challenges faced by smaller rural communities and the need to explore alternative funding and service delivery approaches.

"While the workforce data reveals there is much to celebrate in the Midwest, at the same time, it reminds us that workforce sustainability is about more than recruitment alone," Professor Elliott said.

"This Midwest data tells two stories. Geraldton continues to grow and strengthen as a regional health hub, but smaller communities remain vulnerable.

"We need to ensure the practices serving smaller communities have sustainable operating models that allow them to continue providing care into the future. Our challenge is ensuring that every community - regardless of size - has access to sustainable primary healthcare."

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.

## **ENDS**

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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.*