

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pilbara GP turnover falls to lowest level in almost a decade

New workforce data suggests the Pilbara's general practice workforce is becoming more stable.

According to Rural Health West's latest *Rural General Practice in Western Australia Annual Workforce Update*, GP turnover in the region has fallen to its lowest level in almost a decade.

Turnover in the Pilbara, which has historically experienced some of the highest GP turnover rates in rural WA, fell to 15.5 per cent between November 2024 and November 2025.

This was down from 23.4 per cent the previous year and was well below the rates recorded across much of the past five years.

As recently as 2017–18, GP turnover in the Pilbara reached 31.1 per cent, meaning almost one in three doctors left the region during that year.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer Professor Catherine Elliott said the data pointed to encouraging signs of greater workforce stability.

"While there is still work to do, the data suggests we are moving in the right direction. Importantly, this improvement has occurred while the overall GP workforce has continued to grow," she said.

There were 88 GPs working in the Pilbara as at November 2025, an increase of 11 doctors compared with the previous year.

Professor Elliott said the improved turnover highlighted the importance of focusing not only on attracting health professionals to the Pilbara, but ensuring they have the support needed to build long-term careers there.

"Professional isolation can be a significant challenge in remote regions such as the Pilbara, which is why initiatives that strengthen professional networks and peer support are so important," she said.

One initiative aimed at addressing these challenges is the Rural Health West-led Health Professionals Network (HPN). The Pilbara HPN is one of the most active networks across rural WA, hosting 23 education and networking events for its 1044 members in the 2025-26 financial year.

The latest HPN survey found that 50 per cent of respondents said HPN membership influenced their decision to continue working in a rural community.

Professor Elliott said the collaboration of many organisations has helped attract and retain health professionals to the Pilbara.

“In November 2025, we partnered with the Aboriginal Health Council of WA and several Pilbara-based ACCHOs to attend job fairs in the United Kingdom and Ireland to promote rural WA as a destination of choice for medical professionals,” she said.

“In May, we also hosted a group of junior doctors to tour the Pilbara, so they could see first-hand the professional and lifestyle opportunities available in the region.”

Despite the positive data, Professor Elliott cautioned that the Pilbara could continue to face challenges in attracting and retaining health professionals due to its remoteness, housing availability and affordability and broader cost-of-living pressures.

"The reduction in turnover is encouraging, but addressing these broader challenges will be critical if we want to continue strengthening healthcare access for Pilbara communities," she said.

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.