

MEDIA RELEASE

23 June 2026

South West attracts more doctors, but housing pressures threaten future workforce growth

The South West's rural GP workforce continues to grow and is the primary training ground for our future doctors according to Rural Health West's latest report.

According to the latest *Rural General Practice in Western Australia: Annual Workforce Update*, the South West gained 21 GPs between November 2024 and November 2025, bringing the total workforce to 369 doctors.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer Professor Catherine Elliott said the result reflected the region's continued appeal to health professionals and their families.

"The South West remains one of Western Australia's most attractive regions for health professionals, offering strong professional opportunities, established healthcare services and an exceptional lifestyle," Professor Elliott said.

"The addition of 21 GPs over the past year is a positive result and demonstrates the region's ability to attract and retain workforce."

The report also highlights the stability of the South West workforce. Almost half of all GPs in the region (46.6 per cent) have worked in their current practice for more than five years, while a further 43.1 per cent have been in place for between one and five years.

GP turnover was just 8.4 per cent between November 2024 and November 2025 - the lowest of any country WA region - demonstrating that the South West is not only attracting new doctors but retaining them over the long term.

Professor Elliott said this continuity was invaluable for patients and communities, allowing doctors to build trusted relationships and providing greater certainty for local health services.

However, housing availability and affordability are becoming major workforce challenges in parts of the region.

"Housing is increasingly being raised as a workforce issue by both employers and health professionals," she said.

"More health professionals are asking about housing before they are prepared to accept a position.

"In some cases, securing accommodation has become just as important as discussing salary, professional opportunities or working conditions," she said.

Recent analysis by Shelter WA identified several South West communities among the state's most constrained rental markets, with extremely limited long-term rental availability and growing competition for housing.

While the latest workforce figures were encouraging, Professor Elliott said addressing housing availability would be critical to ensuring the South West could continue attracting the workforce needed to meet future healthcare demand.

"Healthcare workforce planning can no longer be separated from broader issues such as housing, community infrastructure and regional development," 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.

ENDS

Media contact:

Sarah Fittock, Rural Health West, 0414 225 764

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.