

Policy Statement

This policy outlines the support mechanisms provided by GPTT to assist Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander registrars and applicants.

GPTT's vision is *Inspired practitioners – Healthy communities* and an overarching strategic priority within GPTT's Reconciliation Action Plan is to contribute to 'Closing the Gap' by delivering innovative, regionally-based training programs that produces a GP workforce to meet the primary healthcare needs of all Australians.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recently released the updated 'Closing the Gap' 2018 targets indicating, that while there has been some reduction in gap targets, many Indigenous Australians continue to experience poorer health than other Australians, often dying at much younger ages¹.

A culturally responsive general practice environment can play a significant part in improving access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. As reflected in our Reconciliation Action Plan, GPTT believes that increased participation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is important, particularly given general practitioners are considered the first point of contact for most Australians when accessing healthcare. For this reason, GPTT has developed a Registrar Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Policy as a mechanism to reduce potential barriers and assist them to meet their learning outcomes.

Background

The Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) policy statement, *The Role of Doctors in Closing the Gap*, indicates that *fostering the growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical workforce is imperative in improving Indigenous health outcomes and closing the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal people*. This can be achieved through both increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors, and ensuring the provision of culturally safe health services².

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders account for around 35 GP registrars, 204 Indigenous medical practitioners and 310 medical students. The AIDA Student Strategy 2013 – 2015 identifies that support mechanisms are key to supporting Indigenous medical students and improving *Indigenous health outcomes*³.

¹ The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Closing the Gap targets: 2017 analysis of progress and key drivers of change* (Released 23 April 2018) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/e48ac649-2fdd-490d-91cf-4881ab5ef5c2/aihw-ihw-193.pdf> [Downloaded 30/04/2018]

² Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, (2015) <https://www.aida.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/FINAL-The-Role-of-Doctors-in-Closing-the-Gap.pdf>

³ Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, Mentoring Program, <https://www.aida.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/AIDA-Mentoring-Handbook.pdf>

Under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce is one factor contributing to the lower rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing health services. Increasing the rates of participation and completion of training by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian health workforce is fundamental to achieving better health outcomes. Findings from a recent National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students however, indicate that medical practitioners and students of medicine who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, are more likely to be stressed by bullying in the workplace⁴.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework (2016 - 2023) identifies leadership, mentoring, prevocational training, vocational training and work experience as being crucial in providing an appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce and developing a broader health workforce able to deliver culturally appropriate care⁵.

Scope

The scope of this policy is all GPTT Applicants and Registrars who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.

Definitions and Acronyms

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Registrar

For the purposes of this policy, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander registrar is someone who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is eligible to join the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) as an Indigenous member.

Employee refers to any GPTT staff member.

Policy

1. Applying to the GPTT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Program

Applications to the GPTT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Program can be made directly to the GPTT Director of Education and Training prior to commencement, or any time throughout the GPTT training program.

2. Support Mechanisms

2.1 Prior to Commencement/Application

⁴ Beyond Blue National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students
https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/research-project-files/bl1132-report---nmhdms-full-report_web

⁵ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework (2016-2023)
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/work-pubs-natsihwsf>

Registrars and GPTT registrar applicants are able to meet with the GPTT Director of Education and Training prior to undertaking the training program to determine their individual needs and discuss and agree the following:

- Application requirements
- Training placement postings
- Individual learning needs
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Registrar Support Plan Information on mentors and networks
- CPD requirements for mandatory Aboriginal Health Training – and to what degree these may have already been met
- Additional requirements such as relocation costs.

Regular meetings can be scheduled to review the registrar's Support Plan throughout the GPTT training program. This provides opportunities to review and update the Plan.

2.2 Fee Assistance

Funding is available for registrars who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders to assist with fees associated with exams, by application to the Director of Education and Training. On commencing the GPTT program registrars are able to apply for reimbursement of application fees. Fee assistance funding will be determined on a case by case basis.

2.3 Training Placements

GPTT registrar training involves completing placements in accredited training practices located across Tasmania. Flexibility will be provided, outside the *Practice Placement and Enrolment Policy*, for registrars who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander to ensure placement locations are appropriately identified and best suit their individual learning needs. Placement locations can be discussed and agreed in advance with the Director of Education and Training and outlined in the GP registrar's Support Plan.

2.4 Networks

Respondents to a 2016 AIDA Member Survey indicated that highly functioning and actively supported networks offer the best support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander registrars⁶. In recognition of this, encouragement and support will be provided for registrars to be released from practices to attend annual national networks held by the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, Indigenous General Practice Registrars Network (IGPRN) and/or the Indigenous Fellowship Excellence Program.

2.5 Indigenous Fellowship Excellence Program/Exam Preparation

Along with standard GPTT exam preparation, GPTT will provide additional support to practices to allow registrars to be released from practice to attend Indigenous Fellowship Excellence Program events.

⁶ Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, Mentoring Program, <https://www.aida.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/AIDA-Mentoring-Handbook.pdf>

The IFEP event allows participants to network with their peers in a friendly and welcoming environment, while also taking advantage of the opportunity to hear and learn from medical educators and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander GP Fellows. This event supports attendees to perform at their best in the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) and Key Feature Problem (KFP) exams.

2.6 Mentor

The Indigenous General Practice Registrars Network (IGPRN) is a network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander GP registrars to provide professional and cultural support to one another. All Indigenous GP registrars are invited to be a part of IGPRN and it is free to join. – see attached Flyer.

Registrations of interest in joining the network can be emailed to igprnenquiries@gpra.org.au. The IGPRN website provides an update of events <https://gpra.org.au/igprn/>.

In addition to support provided through the IGPRN, GPTT will provide further mentorship/support for registrars throughout the training program on request. Details of local mentors can be discussed and agreed at the Orientation meeting with the Director of Education and Training prior to commencement of the training or at any time throughout the training program.

2.7 Professional Development

Presentation at conferences

GPTT encourages registrars to present at national conferences and workshops and will provide assistance to identify opportunities, develop abstracts and prepare presentation material.

2.8 Attendance at Cultural Events

Individualised support will be provided for registrars to be released from practices to take special/ceremonial leave and attend specific cultural events such as throughout NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week.

2.9 Practice Support


Once identified and agreed, practices will be provided with specific funding to provide for the release of registrars to attend cultural events and network meetings. This will be reflected in the practice agreements of the relevant individual placement such that: *The Practice will ensure that the GP registrar is released to attend cultural events and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander network meetings as identified within individual learning plans.*

Responsibilities

Variations

GPTT reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy from time to time.

Policy Version and Revision Information

Policy Authorised by: Chief Executive Officer 30/09/2018	Original Issue: 30/09/2018
Updated Policy Authorised by:  _____ Chief Executive Officer, Judy Dew	Updated: 7/07/2020
Policy Maintained by: Director of Education and Training	Current Version: 2
Current Version Issued: 30/01/2019	Next Review Date: 31/09/2020

Guidance reference list for mechanisms included in the policy

Mechanism	Rationale	Method
Fee relief	Economic barriers identified as barrier to accessing education and training ¹	Registrars are able to apply for reimbursement of college application and exams fees.
Flexible training placements	Culturally safe workplace and flexible work arrangements are key factors for retention in the workplace for Indigenous people ² . In 2013, the clinical setting was identified as a recurrent space that causes stress for workers and racism was cited as a key theme ³	Flexibility is provided for registrars around training placements. Placements can be tailored around supervision requirements, individual need and in practice cultural safety.
Professional development	Exposure to research is vital to developing academic pathways and leadership ⁴	Support is provided to develop research papers and present at workshops and conferences. This may include through mentoring, assistance to travel and/or release from practice.
Exam Preparation	Exam format is seen as a key barrier for Indigenous registrars ⁵	IGPRN provides Exam Preparation and attendance is encouraged. Additional mentoring can be provided locally.
Support to attend national Indigenous network and workshops such as IGPRN and AIDA	Mentoring, networking and support from colleagues is identified as a key enabler for retention in the health workforce ⁶	Funding is provided for practices to release registrar to attend conferences.
Local mentoring	Mentoring and support from colleagues is identified as key enabler for retention in the health workforce ⁷	Mentoring is allocated in consultation with registrar and based on requirements.
Cultural and Ceremonial leave	Lack of understanding about cultural obligations and protocols leads to stress ⁸	Funding and practice education is provided to support release of registrars to take cultural leave.
Other e.g. travel assistance, and support to relocate for placements	Additional supports as identified	Determined by individual need.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curtis, E. et al What helps and hinders indigenous student success in higher education programmes: a qualitative study using the Critical Incident Technique, Higher Education Research & Development, 2015 Vol 34, No. 3, 486-500, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.973378 2. Health Workforce Australia: Growing our Future: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Project; Health Workforce Australia: Adelaide, Australia, 2011. 3. BeyondBlue 2013, pp 107. 4. Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) and James Cook University (JCU) Joint Research: Strong Futures: Strengthening the Path to Fellowship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Graduates, 2019. 5. Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) and James Cook University (JCU) Joint Research: Strong Futures: Strengthening the Path to Fellowship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Graduates, 2019. 6. Lai, Genevieve et al (2018) Factors Affecting the Retention of Indigenous Australians in the Health Workforce: A systematic Review, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 7. Lai, Genevieve et al (2018) Factors Affecting the Retention of Indigenous Australians in the Health Workforce: A systematic Review, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 8. Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) and James Cook University (JCU) Joint Research: Strong Futures: Strengthening the Path to Fellowship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Graduates, 2019. 	