

RURAL GENERALIST RECOGNITION TASKFORCE

PROGRESS UPDATE · JULY 2021

JOINT APPLICATION TO THE MEDICAL BOARD OF AUSTRALIA FOR RECOGNITION OF RURAL GENERALIST MEDICINE AS A SPECIALIST FIELD

- The Rural Generalist Recognition Taskforce (Taskforce) was formed in September 2019 to oversee the application to the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) for recognition of Rural Generalist Medicine as a specialist field within general practice. It was chaired by Foundation National Rural Health Commissioner (Commissioner), Prof Paul Worley and included representatives of both general practice colleges. A secretariat was established to support this work.
- A national roundtable was held in September 2019 which included Taskforce members, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Prof Brendan Murphy and representatives of the Commonwealth Department of Health (DOH), the Executive Officer of the MBA, Australian Medical Council (AMC) representatives and other key stakeholders. This provided guidance for the Taskforce on the expectations for the process.
- The application process involves a Stage 1 (initial) assessment, and if successfully progresses to a Stage 2 (detailed) assessment which may also include a Regulation Impact Assessment conducted by the Officer of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR).
- The Stage 1 joint application was submitted to the MBA in December 2019. The application's assessment was conducted by the Australian Medical Council (AMC).
- The MBA sent advice in August 2020. This did not specify an assessment outcome but requested that further information be provided. From this advice, there was uncertainty regarding the actions and advice that would be regarded as sufficient to enable proceeding to Stage 2.
- The new Commissioner, A/Prof Ruth Stewart was appointed in September 2020. The Taskforce was reconstituted and reaffirmed its commitment to continue to progress the application.
- A roundtable meeting was convened on 9 October 2020 which included Taskforce members and key DOH staff led by Deputy CMO, Prof Michael Kidd. This discussed progress, timeframes, and implications for the NRGF implementation.
- A meeting was convened of the Taskforce with AMC representatives on 20 January 2021. This provided opportunity for the Taskforce to seek clarity regarding the AMC decision process and expectations. Based on the AMC advice, the key areas of action required were: (1) to undertake a further national consultation; (2) to provide further evidence of RG specialist title's impact on workforce outcomes; and (3) to provide more detailed analysis of the alternative mechanisms to achieve workforce outcomes without Rural Generalist specialist title.

- The Taskforce has undertaken national consultations since that time. A presentation on the application was made to the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) on 18 November 2020. A follow-up letter was sent to all College Presidents which included details of the application and invited further discussions. Similar letters were sent to key stakeholders including to rural and remote community representative groups, medical schools, medical and health professional associations, jurisdictional health services and medical colleges. On request, the Taskforce has met with key groups including specialist medical colleges, medical schools, state and territory health departments, and the Northern Territory Health Minister, NACCHO, and CRANAplus. It has received letters of support from peak professional associations including Rural Doctors Association of Australia, the Australian Medical Association, medical colleges, jurisdictional health services, junior doctors and medical students, medical schools, and rural community representative groups.
- The Taskforce continues to meet to progress its consultations and related issues. ACRRM and RACGP signed a Memorandum of Understanding to reflect their commitment to working together toward progressing the application and the delivery of training in the specialist field.
- The additional advice report was submitted on 5 July 2021. If the MBA supports progress to Stage 2 (detailed assessment of the proposal) it is estimated to take a further 12-18 months. The level, type and timing of consultation is to be determined by the AMC and possibly also by the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR).

For further information or assistance, please contact the joint-application secretariat at recognitiontaskforce@acrmm.org.au.