

# GP Alumni Survey 2021 Report

## Aim of the study

The Western Sydney University (WSU) Department of General Practice has collected information from WSU graduates who have undertaken general practice training. This follows on from our first GP Alumni Survey in 2018. Our aim is to document our alumni training pathways including practice locations so that we can inform key stakeholders including general practice supervisors of WSU success in inspiring our students to choose general practice as a career. Through the survey we also seek contact details so that we can offer support to alumni in their general practice careers, notify them of teaching or research opportunities at WSU and offer an opportunity to network with other GP alumni.

This report presents an analysis of survey responses received between November 2020 and February 2021.

## Methods

The Survey was posted online and an invitation containing a link to the survey was circulated to those alumni known to the Department of General Practice to have commenced training in general practice. We invited those we emailed to further circulate the link to the survey form through their networks.

The three-minute survey asked both open and closed ended questions concerning alumni experience of general practice teaching as students, their stage and location of training, and their current practice.

We analysed the closed ended questions descriptively and thematically analysed the open ended questions.

## Participants

The Alumni Survey received 44 responses between November 2020 and February 2021. These included graduates from eight different graduating cohorts from 2011 to 2019, as illustrated in Figure 1.

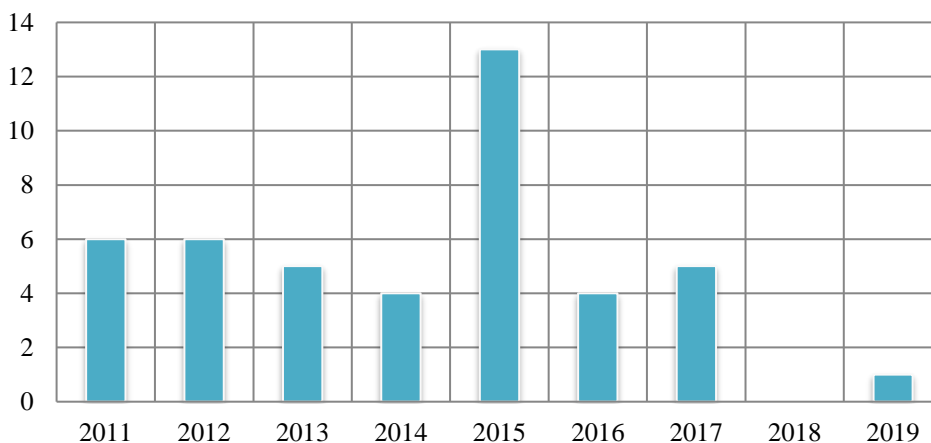


Figure 1: Year of graduation

Twelve survey respondents had undertaken a rural rotation during their medical studies; six each in Lismore and Bathurst Clinical Schools, as illustrated in Figure 2.

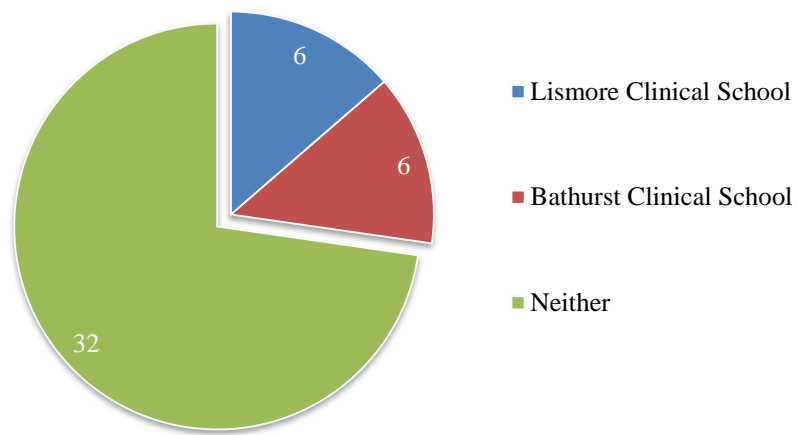


Figure 2: Rural rotations prior to graduation

### Training following graduation:

Figure 3 reports where the participants spent the majority of their time during their internship and residency. Of the 44 responding alumni, five had worked in Network 1 (Inner West and Western Plains); 11 in Network 2 (Bankers and Campers); eight in Network 3 (Concord, Canterbury and Broken Hill); four in Network 4 (Southwest Sydney and Tweed Heads); four in Network 7 (Central Coast); one in Network 8 (St George, Sutherland, Albury and Griffith Hospitals); six in Network 13 (Westnet); two in Network 14 (Nepean Blue Mountains) and one in Network 15 (Central West).

No respondents spent their internship at Networks 5, 6, 9, 10, 11 or 12. Two alumni had worked in the Northern Territory.

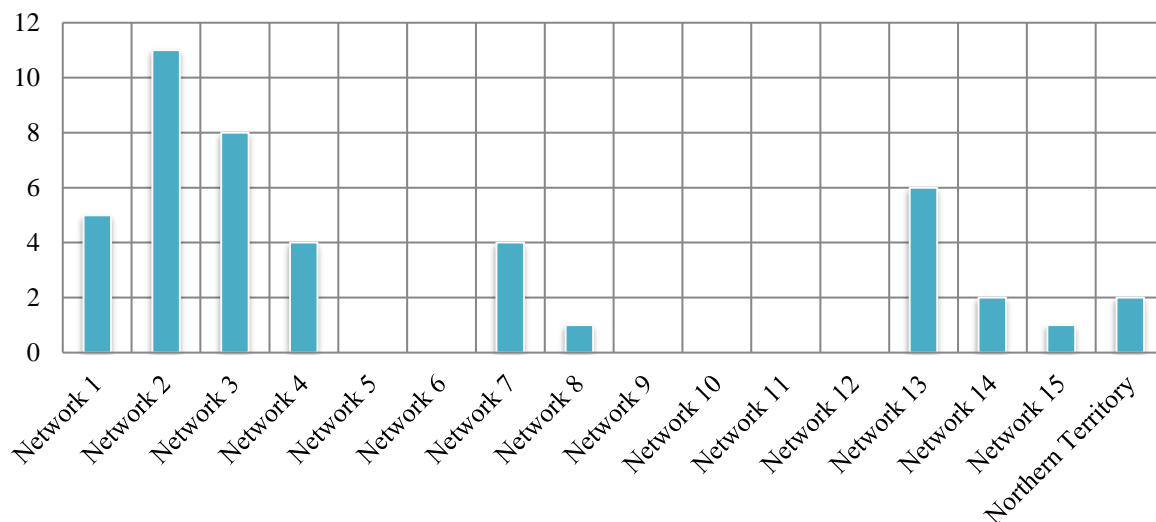


Figure 3: Location of internship/residency\*

\*NSW Government (2018). Health Education and Training Institute: NSW Prevocational Training Networks

[https://www.heti.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/425080/NSW-Prevocational-Training-Networks-and-accredited-facilities.pdf](https://www.heti.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/425080/NSW-Prevocational-Training-Networks-and-accredited-facilities.pdf)

### Rural experience:

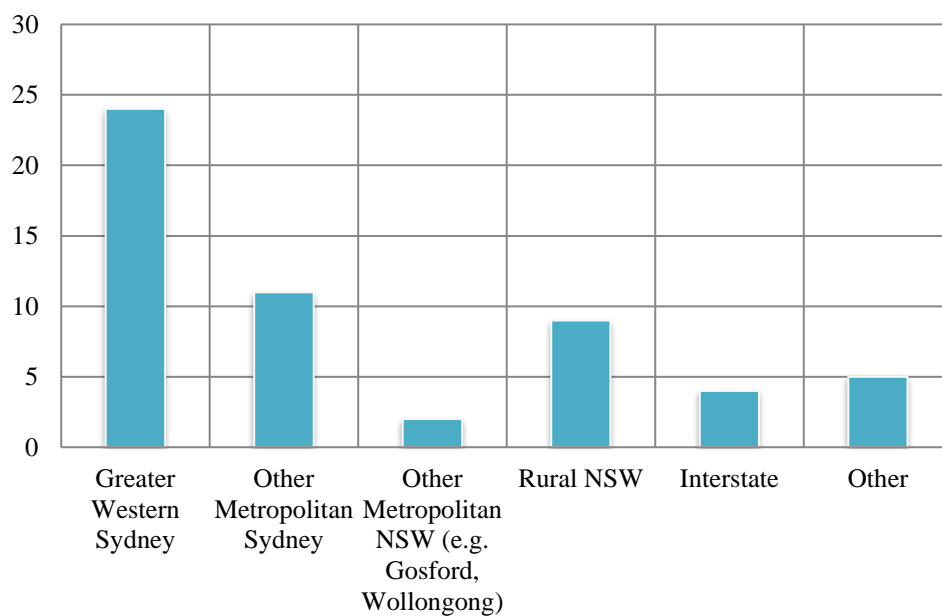
The graduates were asked to indicate whether they had worked in a rural area since graduation, with rural classified as outside Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Newcastle or Wollongong and including comparable locations interstate.

Of the 44 respondents, 20 had worked rurally, with six of them recording more than one rural experience. For 13 of the 20 respondents who had worked rurally, this experience was whilst they were on secondment from an urban hospital. Thirteen respondents reported working rurally as a general practice trainee with RACGP or ACRRM, and six had worked in a rural location after obtaining their Fellowship. A total of 18 respondents had not worked rurally since graduation.

**General Practice training:**

The graduates were asked in which region they had completed, or were completing, their general practice training. Twelve of the respondents selected more than one location, as they were asked to record all that applied to them. In total there were 55 options recorded, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

Greater Western Sydney was the most popular region recorded with 24 responses recorded for training in this region. Other Metropolitan Sydney was the second most popular destination, with 11 responses recorded. Four respondents had trained interstate.



**Figure 4: General Practice Training Locations**

**Working with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service or Aboriginal Medical Service:**

Thirteen alumni reported that they had worked at some stage during their training in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service or Aboriginal Medical Service.

**Qualifications:**

The Graduates were asked if they have obtained a fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and/ or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM). Twenty three respondents reported having obtained their FRACGP (all from the first five cohorts), of which two had also completed FARGP. No respondents had completed an ACRRM Fellowship. Nineteen of the respondents indicated that they had not completed their Fellowship qualification at the time they completed the survey.

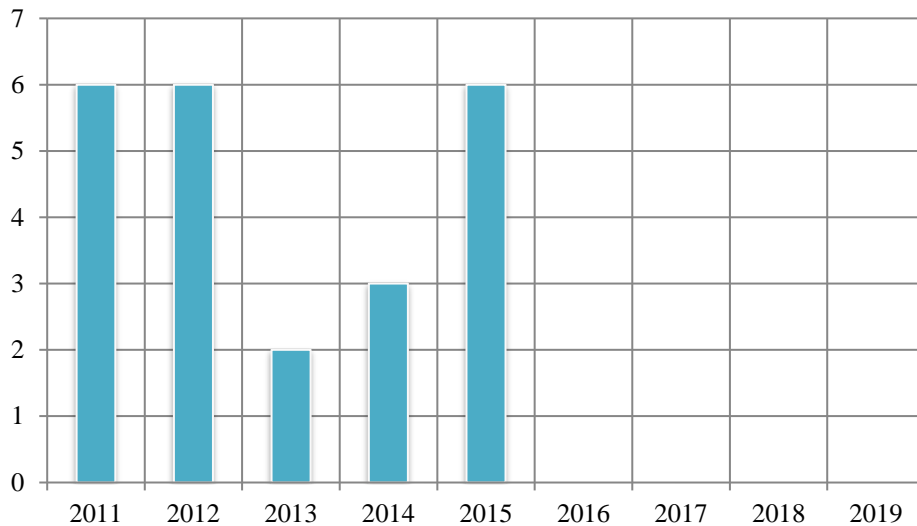


Figure 5: Completion of FRACGP by year of graduation from WSU

### Current practice location:

Alumni were asked to specify the postcode of practices they were currently working at. Of the 41 responses received, 21 alumni were practicing in suburbs within the Greater Western Sydney region, 12 within Metropolitan Sydney or another urban centre in NSW, and a further 8 were working in regional/rural practices or interstate, as demonstrated in Figure 6.

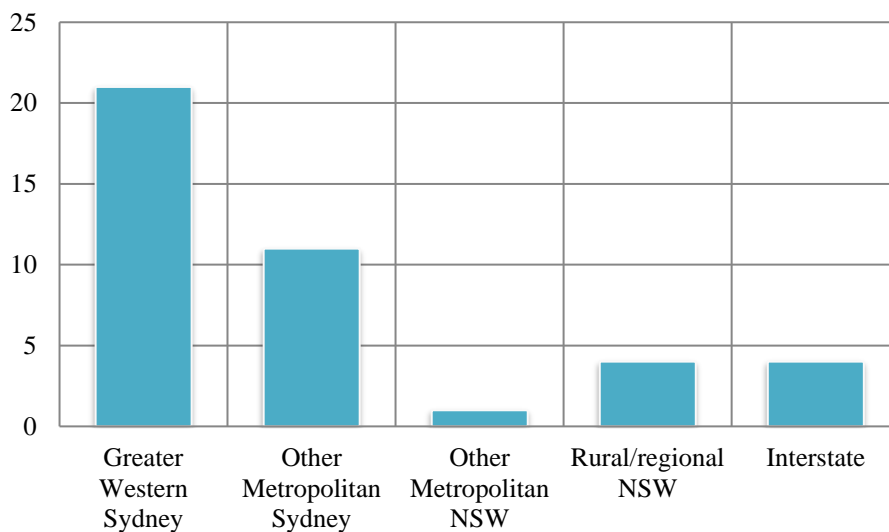


Figure 6: Location of current practice

### Feedback on curriculum

Alumni were asked whether their experience of General Practice at Western Sydney University influenced their decision to undertake General Practice training. Twenty nine respondents reported that their decision was influenced either somewhat or heavily by their GP experience in medical school. A number of alumni recalled their supervisors as strong role models and inspirations, including the late Dr Nick Collins who was a well known local GP and member of our academic team.

Alumni were also given the opportunity to provide feedback in regards to their teaching in general practice at WSU. They were asked what changes they would recommend for the curriculum, based on their subsequent clinical experience. Respondents suggested more clinical exposure to General Practice throughout medical school training, with a focus on ensuring high quality placements for students, immersive teaching in clinics, as well as exposure to

rural placements. Topic areas recommended for additional teaching included practice management, clinical reasoning, clinical anatomy, and common GP presentations in psychiatry, musculoskeletal medicine, and ENT.

### **Limitations and Conclusions**

This analysis of post graduate survey data provides a snapshot of alumni pathways into general practice. It doesn't provide an accurate estimation of WSU graduates engaging in general practice and it is not a representative sample of those who have chosen general practice as a career.

What we learn though is that of our alumni training in general practice, many have spent time as junior medical officers and trainees in Western Sydney and many have experienced rural practice either on hospital rotations or in their general practice training. We are proud to see that many of our GP alumni have gained Fellowships with RACGP, as well as FARGP.

Many recommendations for improving general practice teaching have been actioned from earlier feedback. Medical students at Western Sydney now have exposure to General Practice placements and teaching during their pre-clinical years. We are routinely teaching students on musculoskeletal medicine, ENT, ophthalmology, and women and men's health, including in regular 'back to base' teaching sessions.

Notably, the COVID pandemic had a major impact on General Practice placements in 2020, and a number of changes were made to our GP teaching across different years as we shifted to online teaching. We continue to explore innovative ways to engage and enrich student learning online.

We will continue to monitor student and alumni feedback on our teaching and hope that we can inspire and prepare even more graduates to consider careers in general practice. We thank those who have taken the time to complete surveys and plan to re-survey alumni in the future to update this information and to widen the WSU GP alumni network.