

MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland Rural Generalist Pathway the only way for these bush doctors

Applications for 2017 Queensland Rural Generalist Pathway (QRGP) internships open on 10 March. Young doctors with a passion for rural and remote medicine are being encouraged to consider the rewarding careers available to them via the Queensland QRGP.

In 2015 the tenth anniversary of the initial stakeholder meeting that started the program was celebrated. Interest in the QRGP remains strong with the program's 425th intern starting training in January this year.

For three young doctors practising in rural and remote Queensland the QRGP was the logical choice.

Dr Emma Pickstone, who is now practising on Thursday Island, said the experiences she had while nursing in East Timor gave her a passion for rural and remote medicine.

"Nursing in a developing-world country and having lived rurally for most of my upbringing, I thought the QRGP was the best path to follow," she said.

"Getting set up to work in a remote location was challenging but the QRGP team were there to support me and I wouldn't have come up here if it wasn't for them coming through for me when I needed them.

"I'm very glad to be here now, practising on Thursday Island, which is amazing and one of the best jobs you could have in medicine.

"I would advise anyone considering rural medicine, especially if you're community-minded, to go for it because it is far more interesting than metropolitan medicine and the people at the QRGP will be there to help you, so it's really the way to go."

QRGP was also an easy choice for Dr Marjad Page. The Mt Isa local identifies strongly as a Christian, and a proud Aboriginal Australian descended from the Kalkadoon, Waanyi and Ganggalidda tribes of northwest Queensland. He followed the QRGP back to where he could help his people the most.

"I always wanted to come back to Mt Isa, I'm coming up on my fourth year back and it's great to be practising in my home community," Dr Page said.

"From the time I started as a medical student at James Cook University my plan was to be a GP practising in a rural or remote area after I graduated, so I decided the QRGP was for me.

“To be able to specialise in a particular area was quite significant for me too, that was another reason for choosing the QRGP. It’s the way to go if you want to be a GP in a rural or remote setting.”

Roma GP Dr Nikita Shanley is another young doctor who returned to her home town after choosing to follow the QRGP.

“Since I was about 10 I’d always wanted to do medicine and I liked the idea of rural medicine and being back out in the country,” Dr Shanley said.

“In my first year of medical school I did a placement at Emerald with Dr Ewen McPhee and he inspired me further to continue into rural practice.

“What I liked was the variety and the fact that he was doing a different thing every day and that got me even more interested so I applied for the QRGP in my final year of medical school.”

Dr Shanley is in her first year back at Roma, having spent the previous five years at Nambour Hospital.

“I was concerned about some of aspects of coming back to work in my home town but I’m happy to say those concerns were unfounded,” she said.

“There is a perception in the city that I was being sent out to the bush on my own, and that I would have to be able to do everything myself, without any help if something went wrong, but that’s a misconception because you’re never alone.

“I’ve had plenty of support from the doctors here in Roma, and on occasions when we’ve had to call Toowoomba Hospital for advice we’ve found that the people we speak to have been really supportive in helping us care for the patient.”

Dr Shanley said support was a key theme throughout her journey on the QRGP.

“The QRGP has provided stable mentoring all the way through, for example when I’ve changed teams, different training organisations, different hospitals, the team from QRGP has been the one constant throughout and they have been really supportive,” she said.

“It’s good to have that base with someone you can contact when everything else is changing. Dr James Telfer was my mentor and he was a really stable influence, and I think having that stability is another reason to join the QRGP.”

Additional information:

- The QRGP, hosted by the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, provides medical graduates with a supported training pathway to a career in rural medicine; and rural and remote communities with a skilled medical workforce.
- Rural generalist interns can train at 14 hospitals across Queensland including Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Redcliffe, Caboolture, Logan, Nambour, Redland, Mount Isa and Gold Coast.

- The QRGP is targeting 80 positions for the 2017 intake.
- Face-to-face and online information sessions on the opportunities offered by the QRGP are being held in March. For more information visit:
<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/ruralgeneralist/default.asp>

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