

Workforce analysis: Rural resident specialists in Western Australia



Profile of the rural resident specialist workforce 2014

Reporting resident specialist trends

Rural Health West maintains a database of resident specialists who work in rural and remote Western Australia in Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Areas (RAs) 2 to 5.

This database is updated continuously with intelligence from rural areas and annually through the Resident Specialist Survey. A total of 82 (47.7%) of the recorded rural and remote resident specialists responded to the 2014 survey.

This is the third annual snapshot Rural Health West has published about the resident specialist workforce with this report based on the 2014 survey data. Together with ongoing data collection strategies, this means that Rural Health West can offer contemporary valid evidence about trends in the resident specialist workforce.

Number and location of resident specialists

At the census date of 2 August 2014, there were 172 resident specialists identified as living and working in rural and remote Western Australia (RA 2 to 5). This was an increase of 22 specialists compared to 2013, when 150 specialists were recorded. These specialists resided in RA 2 to 4 areas. In 2013, more than half (54%) were living in an RA 2 location. In 2014, less than 50% of specialists resided in an RA 2 location. The greatest increase in specialist numbers in 2014 was in RA3 locations with 12 additional recorded specialists.

ASGC RA 2	81 (+4)	49.4%
ASGC RA 3	51 (+12)	36.6%
ASGC RA 4	18 (+6)	14.0%

Specialties practised

The 172 resident specialists practised across 19 specialties. The five most practised specialties (anaesthetics, general surgery,

physician, paediatrics and psychiatry) accounted for 57.6% of the rural resident specialist workforce.

The 22 additional specialists identified in 2014 were recorded across 11 specialties (anaesthetics, general surgery, physician, paediatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics/gynaecology, emergency, ophthalmology, radiology, public health and renal medicine). This growth was counterbalanced by a recorded outflow of one specialist (cardiology). There was no change in resident specialist numbers recorded across the other specialties.

Specialty	Number of resident specialists
Anaesthetics	22
General surgery	22
Physician	21
Paediatrics	17
Psychiatry	17
Obstetrics/gynaecology	15
Emergency	15
Orthopaedic surgery	10
Ophthalmology	9
Radiology	8
Public health	4
Urology	3
Palliative medicine	2
ENT	2
Cardiology	1
Oncology	1
Geriatric medicine	1
High dependency/ICU	1
Renal medicine	1
Total	172

Age and gender

The database holds age records for 125 (72.7%) of the current resident specialist workforce. The average age of this group in August 2014 was 52.8 years, with more than half the workforce aged between 35 and 54 (61.6%). 79.1% of the resident specialist workforce is male.

Specialist age	All	Female	Male
35-44	32 25.6%	7	25
45-54	45 36.0%	13	32
55-64	31 24.8 %	3	28
65+	17 13.6%	1	16
Average age (125 doctors)	52.8	49.9	53.3
Men (all age groups)	101		
Women (all age groups)	24		

Remoteness and hours worked

The database holds current working hours (excluding on-call) and length of stay information for 77 (44.8%) of the resident specialist workforce. This information shows a similar pattern to previous years, with an inverse relationship between self-reported hours worked per week and RA location, with resident specialists in RA4 reporting working more hours per week on average compared to their colleagues in less remote areas.

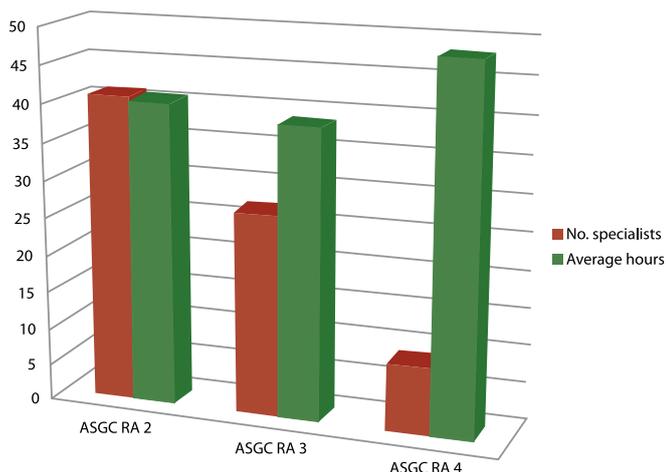


Figure 1: Number of specialists by RA and average hours worked

Length of stay

The database holds length of stay information for 164 (95.3%) resident specialists. The average length of stay in the current practice was 7.3 years in 2014 compared to 7.2 years in 2013. There was little difference between the average length of stay for males (7.35 years) and females (7.24 years).

Length of stay <1 year	15 (9.1%)
Length of stay 1-5 years	60 (36.6%)
Length of stay >5 years	89 (54.3%)

Where specialists trained

The database records training information for 157 (91.3%) rural resident specialists. 38.2% (60) of those specialists completed their basic medical qualification at an Australian university, compared to 61.8% (97) who completed their basic medical qualification overseas. Doctors from the United Kingdom, South Africa, India and New Zealand represent the majority (70.1%) of the overseas trained resident specialists.

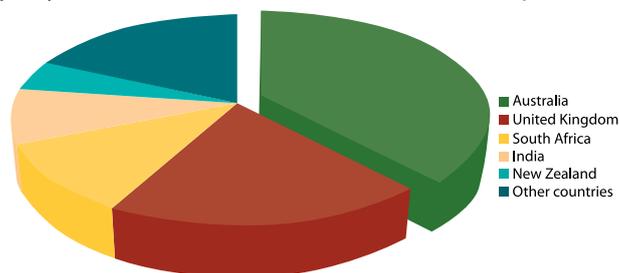


Figure 2: Country of basic medical qualification

Visiting specialists

As well as having access to resident specialists, patients in rural and remote Western Australia are supported by visiting specialists. Rural Health West has identified 266 specialists who currently provide visiting services to rural and remote locations in Western Australia. These visiting specialists include those providing services under the Outreach in the Outback programs.

Other fact sheets

Rural Health West publishes five fact sheets annually describing trends in the rural and remote general practice workforce and two information sheets about the nursing, midwifery, dental and allied health workforce in the primary health care sector. These are available on the Rural Health West website at www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/workforcedata.