The Remote Vocational Training Stream (RVTS)

Program Overview
The RVTS is a vocational training program which is available to isolated doctors who under ordinary circumstances could not complete vocational training except by leaving their communities. The program offers training which qualifies its graduates for vocational training awards through RACGP and ACRRM and by extension, for Vocational Recognition (VR). The program has been specially designed to accommodate the particular circumstances of remote practice and to offer the best possible educational experience within the practical constraints that this presents. It is characterised by its remote supervision model; use of innovative information and telecommunication technologies; individualised learning programs; population health focus; and, community involvement.

The RVTS uses the following definition of remote practice:
Remote/rural practice is rural practice in communities over 80 km or 1 hour by road from a centre with no less than a continuous specialist service in anaesthesia, obstetrics and surgery and a fully functional operating theatre.

Upon successful completion of training participants will:
• Have attained comprehensive knowledge, skills and attributes for unsupervised general practice / rural and remote medical practice in Australia
• Have completed all the training requirements for both the FRACGP and the FACRRM (Assoc)
• Have remained based in rural or remote practice, which did not have an on-site teaching and support system previously recognised by the AGPTP.
• Be confident and competent to provide services and leadership in healthcare in an isolated setting and, with all other things being equal, motivated to continue to practice in such settings with well established lifelong learning skills.
• Have provided comprehensive high quality medical care to remote communities throughout their experience and therefore will be better able to maintain/sustain such services into the future.

The RVTS aims to address:
• Needs – The training program provided reflects the diverse needs of remote communities and meets the remote educational needs of the registrars undertaking it.
• Clinical experience – Registrars are exposed to a wide range of clinical experiences to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to prepare them for the realities of remote medical practice.
• Supervision – The registrar will be appropriately supervised and well supported throughout the experience with a strong focus on self care and the development of community and professional networks.
• Educational support – Educational processes will be developed to ensure those supervising the registrar are available and well supported. This will
be achieved through the establishment of a structured selection, professional development and accreditation process.

- Personal support – Adequate structures will be put into place to ensure the registrar has access to debriefing and support services on a continual basis, sufficient to maintain motivation and a balanced lifestyle for themselves and their family.
- Resources – Sufficient and appropriate infrastructure and resources are made available to both registrars and supervisors who are well orientated to their use.
- Flexibility – Training is tailored to meet the specific needs of the registrar and there is appropriate flexibility to meet the diverse and local needs of remote communities.
- Workforce needs – The training program makes a contribution to increasing the retention and recruitment of doctors to remote communities, whilst providing the community with a well-supported health service.

Curriculum

The RVTS curriculum incorporates the RACGP Curriculum and the ACRRM Primary Curriculum. It encompasses the following key areas related specially to remote practice.

- **Clinical Skills** – This incorporates, essential emergency skills and knowledge (including, Trauma, Obstetric skills, Internal medicine, Surgery, Paediatrics, Psychiatry, Women in rural practice, Retrieval medicine); and, other essential skills and knowledge special to the remote setting

- **The nature of remote communities** – This incorporates issues such as support structures and family issues, professional boundary issues, confidentiality, social and cultural influences of mental health, home visiting protocols, and cultural frameworks.

- **Public Health** – This incorporates, remote population health, public health infrastructure, disease control, remote environmental health, remote preventive medicine, relevant legislation, community roles, and the role of the remote doctor as community advocate and government medical officer.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health**

- **Management skills and professional networks** – This incorporates effective practice management and integration with other health services, teamwork, support networks, media management in crises, information technology applications, and developing healthcare projects.

- **Self-Care** – This incorporates such areas as professional development strategies, self-analysis, working in a remote context and stress management.
Eligibility Criteria
To qualify for entry into the program applicants must:

- Be eligible to join the AGPTP, but be unable to undertake its required terms in accredited training practices under current arrangements without leaving their current practice.
- Be eligible to undertake vocational training in the ACRRM Training Pathway
- Be a recent graduate of an Australian medical school or the Australian Medical Council Examination (clinical).
- Have an expressed interest in a career in rural medical practice.
- Currently work and reside in isolated medical practice in a community in which local medical services would be substantially compromised by their departure, in particular where there is no alternative doctor.
- Continue to reside and work in an isolated community for the majority of their training (except for approved hospital training).

The following additional conditions will also be considered:

- Evidence of community support for their continued practice in that community is available.
- Candidates are judged (based on all available evidence) to be suited to the program.
- Written evidence is provided by the relevant RWA that the proposed training practice is in a rural or remote area of need.

Recognition of Prior Learning
RPL is determined on an individual basis and will be reflected in the program requirements for that individual. Up to 18 months RPL may be granted toward the FRACGP and FACRRM. 12 months for approved hospital posts and 6 months for approved general practice experience.

The Selection Process
The Commonwealth Government has placed a quota of 11 registrars in the RVTS at any one time. Four positions will become vacant in February 2004. Applications will close by COB Wednesday December 31, 2003. Interviews will take place in the weeks of January 12 - 23, by teleconference. Successful applicants will begin training with the RVTS in February 2004

Rural Training Pathway and RRIPS
Applicants entering the RVTS will be in the Rural Pathway and will be required to complete the majority of their training in RRMA 4 – 7. Currently, applicants entering the Rural Pathway are eligible for generous financial incentives. The Government has introduced the General Practice Registrars' Rural Incentives Payments Scheme (RRIPS) to provide incentive payments to general practice registrars who join the Rural Pathway and undertake the majority of their general practice training in RRMA 4–7 locations. Up to $60,000 is available to each registrar over three years of general practice training. Eligible registrars will receive $10,000 in Year 1, $20,000 in
Year 2 and $30,000 in Year 3 to encourage continuing participation in the Rural Pathway.
Registrars will not receive incentive payments for undertaking the mandatory hospital training year. Payments are retrospective at six-monthly intervals on receipt of a claim for payment from registrars.
Further information about the Registrars’ Rural Incentives Payments Scheme can be obtained by contacting the Department of Health and Ageing, General Practice Helpline on 1800 667 677.