

## Closing the Loop - Feedback on Workforce Surveys

The NSW Rural Doctors Network (RDN) routinely collects information on the GP workforce from GPs and Practice Managers. We ask GPs to return an annual survey in August/September, and Practice Managers to return surveys in March and October. In addition, we collect information from Divisions of General Practice, Regional Training Providers, the NSW Medical Board and other sources. We appreciate the participation of GPs and Practice Managers in this process.

For the 2008 GP Survey and Practice Manager survey, the combined response rate for GPs in RRMA 4 to 7 was 79.3%. Such a high response rate helps to ensure the accuracy of the reports that we publish on the GP workforce. There are two major reports that present this information: **NSW RDN Minimum Data Set Report** and **National Minimum Data Set Report**. These reports are based on snapshot data as at **30 November 2008** and while both cover RRMA 4 to 7 only, RRMA 3 results are also critical for our work.

Trends in the **most recent NSW RDN Minimum Data Set Report** are shown in the table below.

**Trends & Changes in Rural NSW RRMA 4 to 7 - November 2003 to November 2008**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total practitioners (including registrars)	1126	1164	1198	1173	1185	1268
Percent female	26.9	28.4	28.3	29.1	30.0	30.8
Percent male	73.1	71.6	71.7	70.9	70.0	69.2
Average age female	44.5	45.2	45.9	45.8	47.0	46.4
Average age male	49.7	50.1	50.7	50.4	51.9	51.1
Average age (all)	48.4	48.8	49.4	49.1	50.5	49.7
Average GP clinical hours	33.9	33.0	33.6	35.2	34.6	36.3
Average total hours	45.9	44.9	46.2	44.8	47.1	44.7
Average length of stay in current practice (years)	9.9	9.9	10.1	10.2	11.03	9.71
Proceduralists General Anaesthetics	103	99	100	88	84	92
Proceduralists Obstetrics (normal delivery)	154	152	149	122	113	117
Proceduralists Operative Surgery	61	67	62	61	56	63
Proceduralists (practising in at least one procedural field)	239	233	230	201	185	190
Proportion of rural practitioners providing procedural services	21.2	20.0	19.2	17.1	15.6	15.0
Proportion of GPs working in solo practices	21.8	25.7	24.6	23.1	21.4	21.1
Proportion of GPs working in group practices	78.2	74.3	75.4	76.9	78.6	78.9

Other trends and changes drawn from the report include:

- An increase of 7.0% (N=83) in rural practitioner numbers between 2007 and 2008, mostly due to an increase in registrar numbers.
- A small increase in the percentage of female practitioners working in RRMA 4 to 7 locations.

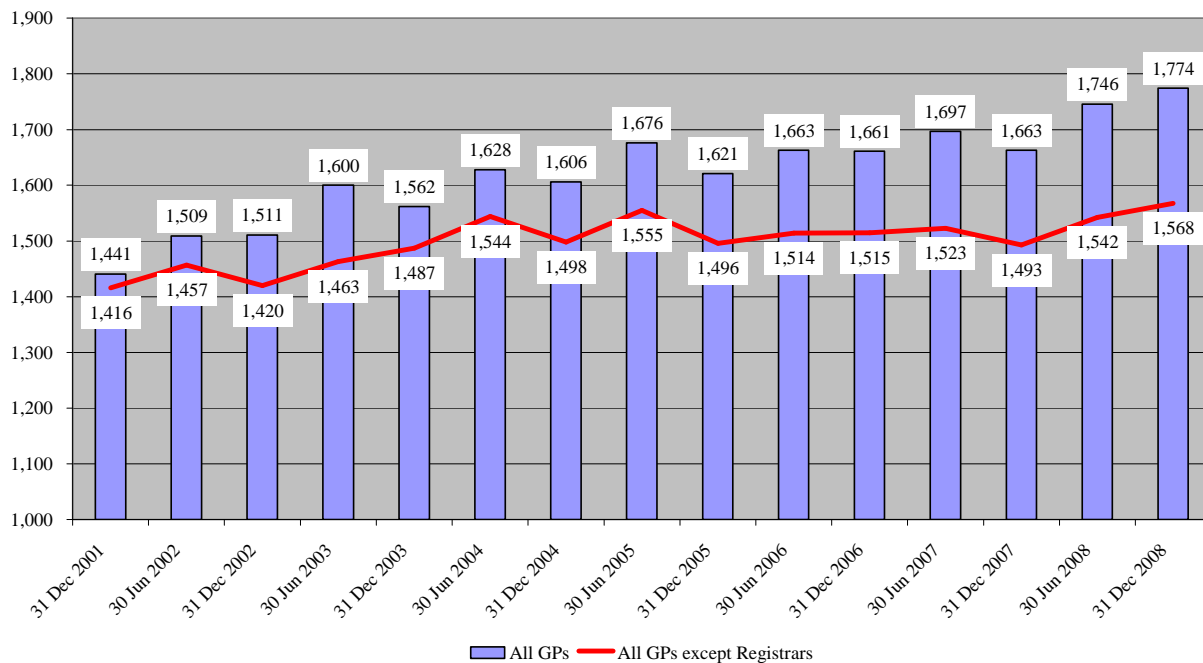
- A decrease in the number of rural and remote practitioners working in sole practice situations (21.1% as opposed to 21.4% in 2007).
- A continuation of the increasing number of female practitioners in lower age groups.
- A continuation of trends suggesting that female practitioners tend to work less hours compared with their male counterparts.
- A slight increase in the average number of clinical hours worked per week. (36.3 hours as compared to 34.6 in 2007).
- A decline in the proportion of rural and remote practitioners providing procedural services.
- A continuing decline in the number of GPs holding VMO appointments.

The **most recent National Minimum Data Set Report** allows for a comparison of the national report with the NSW report and shows:

- That NSW has the second lowest percentage of female GPs, but the highest number of female GPs.
- The average age of GPs in NSW is 1.4 years more than the national average. While the NSW workforce is older, this fact reflects the success in NSW in retaining doctors.
- The average total hours worked by NSW GPs is about an hour more than the national average.
- The average length of stay in principal practice in NSW is about 1.5 years more than the national average.
- The percentage of solo practices in NSW (21.1%) is much higher than the national average (13.1%).
- The average clinical hours worked by NSW GPs has increased slightly. This figure is against the national trend of a slight decline.

The number of GPs practising in rural NSW, including RRMA 3 and the few RRMA 2 areas in a rural division of general practice, are shown in the chart below.

**Number of GPs practising in RRMAs 2 to 7 in NSW**



We encourage you to find out more by viewing the Minimum Data Set reports on the RDN website at [www.nswrdn.com.au](http://www.nswrdn.com.au) and go to:  
**News & Publications > Publications > GP Workforce Data > Reports**