

POSITION STATEMENT

Recruitment and Retention of Specialist Anaesthetists to Rural Areas

Preamble

Australia does not have an acknowledged shortage of anaesthetists but there is an acknowledged maldistribution. This maldistribution predominately affects the rural community where there is a continued and critical shortage of anaesthetists.

The specialist anaesthetist population ratio reported in the Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee Report, "The Specialist Anaesthetic Workforce in Australia 2001" was 1:8622.

The same report indicates that the specialist anaesthetist population ratio in remote and rural areas is 1:44,034 (excluding non specialist anaesthetists).

Shortage of anaesthetists

The shortage of anaesthetists in rural areas is due to some or all of the following:

1. Isolation both professional and social.
2. Unacceptably heavy workload particularly with the on call and call back commitments.
3. Wider range of skills required of the rural anaesthetist.
4. Relatively poor conditions of service including remuneration.
5. Inadequate anaesthesia, intensive care and office facilities.
6. Difficulty in obtaining necessary ongoing education.
7. Difficulty in obtaining leave for both vacation and continuing education.
8. Inadequate employment opportunities for other family members.
9. Limited educational opportunities for children.

Attraction and retention of anaesthetists

To attract and retain anaesthetists in rural areas requires appropriate conditions, including:

1. Anaesthetists being fully informed about the positive and negative aspects of rural practice.

2. General assistance to the anaesthetist with:

- Transport and relocation expenses.
- Accommodation provided or subsidised.
- Motor vehicle
- Professional and clinical support
- Offices and staff provided or subsidised
- Anaesthesia and intensive care facilities to the standard prescribed by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists in their professional documents.
- Rostering which complies with the Australian Society of Anaesthetists' Position Statement on the Provision of Out of Hours Anaesthesia Services.
- Mentor support from experienced colleagues either locally or from a distance through a base, metropolitan or city hospital.
- Guaranteed locums and leave.
- Access to regular continuing education.
- Necessary communication facilities - telephone, facsimile machine and computer with internet access.
- Involvement in day to day educational activities such as morbidity and mortality reviews, anaesthesia incident monitoring review or journal reviews either locally or from a distance.
- Access to information through libraries, CD ROMS, the internet and distance learning.

1. Involvement in hospital and Area Health Board activities through representation on relevant committees such as credential and planning committees.

2. Remuneration at a level that is commensurate with the responsibility and work undertaken and provides financial security. This includes:

- An agreed salary package

- A guaranteed minimum net salary with any necessary salary top up provided by the Government or the local community including funding for adequate leave for both continuing education and vacation.
- Superannuation.
- Transport and relocation expenses.
- Accommodation provided or subsidised.

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