



Australian Government  
General Practice Education  
and Training Limited

The top half of the cover features a vibrant Aboriginal dot painting. It consists of a dark background with intricate patterns of red, yellow, and white dots. Several large, stylized circular motifs are scattered across the design, each composed of concentric rings of dots. A thin white line weaves through the composition, connecting some of these circular elements. The overall effect is one of traditional artistry and cultural depth.

# CULTURAL EDUCATORS AND CULTURAL MENTORS: BUILDING TRUST AND RESPECT

A horizontal line of small yellow dots runs across the bottom of the red section, just above the footer area.



# FOREWORD



*The GPET board, management and staff remain passionate and committed to the Council of Australian Governments' initiative of 'Closing the Gap'.*

GPET would like to acknowledge the significant support provided by so many of our partners and stakeholders to develop the content provided in this publication. Your experience, expertise and commitment have allowed GPET and all the regional training providers to improve our understanding of Cultural Education and Cultural Mentoring in the context of General Practice vocational and prevocational training. This has supported GPET to understand the requirement for meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the design and delivery of cultural competency training that promotes safe training, safe doctors and safe communities.

Since the development and finalising of this publication, the Federal Budget (2014-15) has been handed down which will see GPET's operations transitioned into the Department of Health at the end of 2014. This means that the AGPT program and the work of the GPET Aboriginal health training unit will move across to the Department of Health which will assume control of the AGPT program from 1 January 2015.

The GPET board, management and staff remain passionate and committed to the Council of Australian Governments' initiative of 'Closing the Gap'. Particularly the work of the Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors, and we encourage all those involved in the work supporting this milestone publication to continue their work to improve the health outcomes of all people in Australia.

It is our hope that the dedicated efforts of the Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors will continue and their work will be reflected in the ongoing core business of the new regionalised training environment. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these initiatives to build trust and respect through the regional training providers strategic planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural training for GP Registrars.

Thank you for your support it is appreciated and valued by many.

Professor Marlene Drysdale  
GPET Senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Adviser

# TERMINOLOGY:

<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health training post</b>	Refers to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) An Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS), which holds the relevant college accreditation or</li><li>b) A State and Territory owned primary health care facility, which holds the relevant college accreditation.</li></ul>
<b>Accredited ACCHS</b>	Refers to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) which has been accredited to deliver training registrar training under the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program.
<b>ACCHS</b>	The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) states: “An Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) is a comprehensive primary health care service initiated and operated by the local Aboriginal community to delivery, holistic and culturally appropriate health care to the community which controls it (through a locally elected Board of Management).” NACCHO 2014, ‘About Us’, para 4, <a href="http://www.naccho.org.au">www.naccho.org.au</a>
<b>AGPT program</b>	The Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program is a three or four year vocational training program undertaken by medical doctors seeking specialist (general practitioner) registration with the Medical Board of Australia.
<b>General practice</b>	Where the term ‘general practice’ is used in this brochure, it is deemed to include rural and remote medicine, where context permits.
<b>GPET</b>	General Practice Education and Training Limited (GPET) manage and fund the AGPT program on behalf of the Commonwealth. GPET is a company limited by guarantee and is wholly owned by the Australian government.
<b>GP Registrar</b>	A GP registrar is a trainee doctor who has general registration and is enrolled in the AGPT program to pursue specialist general practice training with ACRRM and/or RACGP.
<b>Relevant College Accreditation</b>	Refers to a training facility that has been accredited to deliver general practice training (AGPT) in accordance with the vocational training standards and requirements published by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and/or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM).
<b>RTP</b>	A Regional Training Provider (RTP) is an organisation contracted by GPET to deliver the AGPT program within a designated region of Australia.



EVERY DAY, CULTURAL EDUCATORS AND CULTURAL MENTORS ARE WORKING ACROSS AUSTRALIA TO BRIDGE THE CULTURAL GAP AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE.

## Cultural education and cultural mentoring is

- good for doctors and staff who can gain confidence, broaden their experience and develop more holistic skills,
- good for the community, members of which can feel more comfortable seeking health care when assured of cultural safety, and
- good for the organisation which, with better-trained personnel and more engagement with the community, can work more effectively and achieve greater results.



Promoting the cultural competence of all those involved in general practice training – such as Medical Educators, RTP staff and GP supervisors – is an ongoing priority which is complementary to the primary focus on GP Registrars and Junior Doctors.

**Through their work, Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors take on the important role of guiding registrars, junior doctors and RTP staff to feel safe, comfortable and confident in the way they work and interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.**

In addition Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors provide support and guidance to organisations to ensure they are able to provide a welcoming environment that is culturally appropriate, safe and respectful of the needs of the community and its members. This is essential work and seen as a key step in building workable partnerships which can improve the quality and delivery of health services that can bring a range of sustainable benefits to community and people.

- As a result, members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community can rightly feel more comfortable in accessing the health care services they need, and more confident of receiving the appropriate treatment.
- Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are encouraged to continue this important work and become a Cultural Educator or Cultural Mentor.
- In 2014, the Australian Government increased the number of GP Registrar training places on offer by 300, bringing the intake for the AGPT program 2015 cohort of registrars to 1,500.
- This year GPET received a record number of 2,300 eligible applications for the 1500 places from doctors seeking selection into the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program. This was the largest number of applicants GPET has received and the 1500 places will be awarded, on merit.

# ABORIGINAL HEALTH TRAINING IN GENERAL PRACTICE

GPs (unlike their specialist colleagues), are more likely to be the first point of contact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with health concerns. General practitioners are therefore uniquely positioned to take a lead role in providing health services and advice that can improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Sadly, the health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia today are significantly poorer than those experienced by the wider population.

- For example, the current gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is estimated to be 10.6 years for males and 9.5 years for females and the gap remains even in a health system where low life expectancy is in itself an indicator of the need to increase access to improved health services
- GPET, is a national organisation which is actively involved in the training of GPs across Australia and this provides GPET with the opportunity and capacity to make a significant contribution to the closing the gap initiative and to help address health inequality.

## From Cultural Educator, Gaye Doolan

*“Being a Cultural Educator provides me with an opportunity to meet GPRs from diverse cultural backgrounds and help them on their cultural education journey. Through interactive yarning sessions and personal reflections GPRs are encouraged to actively engage with opportunities to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop the skills to become culturally competent.”*



# THE ROLE OF CULTURAL EDUCATORS AND CULTURAL MENTORS

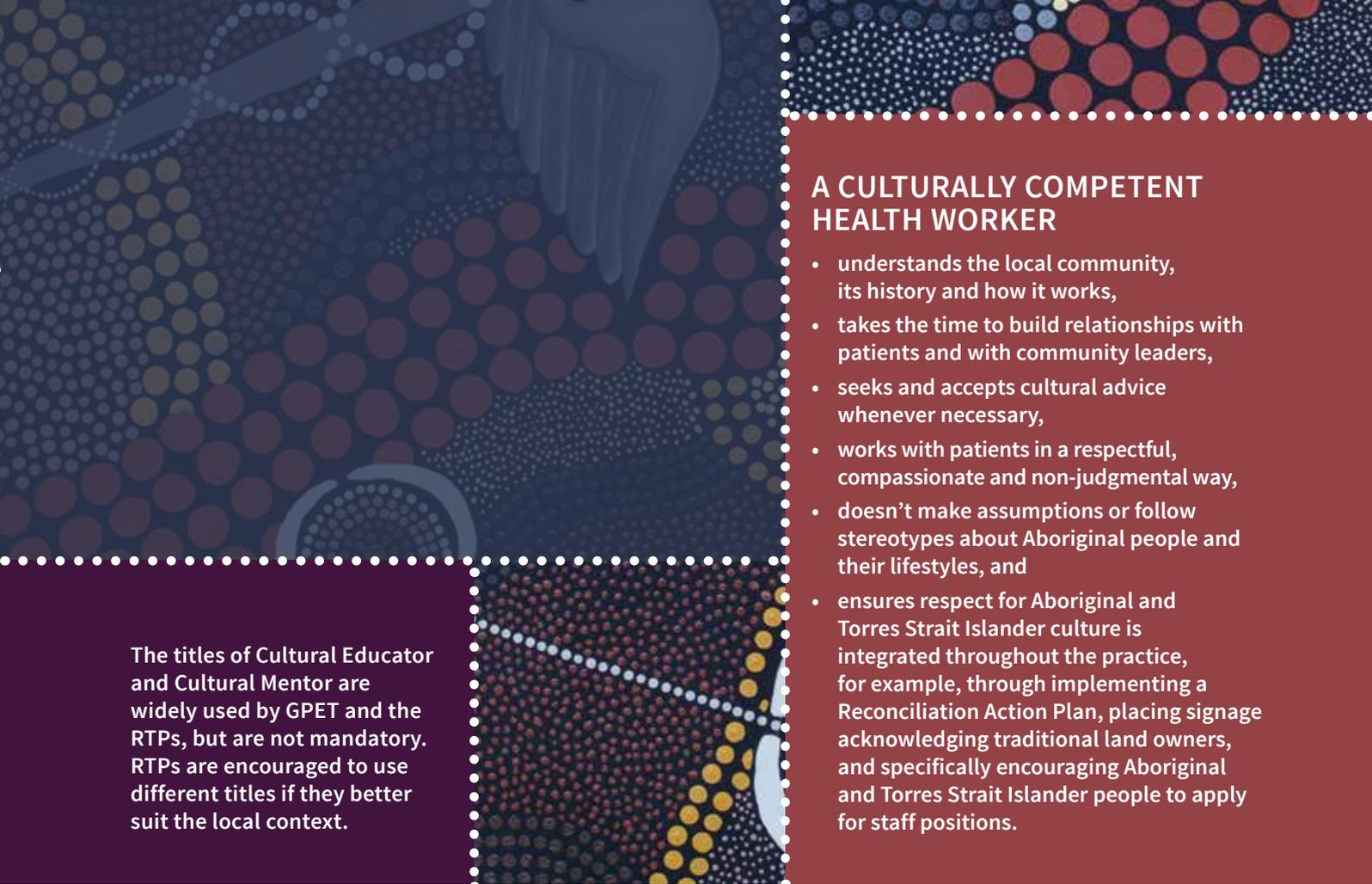
One of the reasons for the differences in life expectancy is the difficulty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians experience in accessing mainstream health care.

Financial and geographic obstacles, along with a range of other complex personal and cultural barriers (including communication and language difficulties plus institutionalised racism) often combine in ways that mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are less likely to have access to the culturally safe health care they need.

- The establishment of the Cultural Educator and Cultural Mentor positions are just one part of GPET's ongoing efforts to ensure members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community feel safe, welcome and encouraged to seek out health care and medical treatment from their general practitioners.
- GPET also recognises that GP Registrars may lack confidence or experience in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and this may mean registrars are hesitant about taking up a training position in an Aboriginal health training post.

## From Cultural Educator, Trevor Kapeen

*“Cultural Mentoring and Cultural Education means that we must be aware of what and how we can teach others, to help clear a pathway for better insight and understanding to achieve maximum quality outcomes in health. By teaching this message the doctors then have a more indepth knowledge on what the patient’s cultural background and living conditions might be. This would then help create a shifting of knowledge of what they presume to understand to what actually happens.”*



The titles of Cultural Educator and Cultural Mentor are widely used by GPET and the RTPs, but are not mandatory. RTPs are encouraged to use different titles if they better suit the local context.

## A CULTURALLY COMPETENT HEALTH WORKER

- understands the local community, its history and how it works,
- takes the time to build relationships with patients and with community leaders,
- seeks and accepts cultural advice whenever necessary,
- works with patients in a respectful, compassionate and non-judgmental way,
- doesn't make assumptions or follow stereotypes about Aboriginal people and their lifestyles, and
- ensures respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is integrated throughout the practice, for example, through implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan, placing signage acknowledging traditional land owners, and specifically encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for staff positions.

The network of Cultural Educators (CE) and Cultural Mentors (CM) are an important part of the work that is needed to help bridge the gap between the delivery of quality health services and the community needing those health services. This is best achieved where a GP has gained an understanding of a community and the health concerns of the community members. With support (and encouragement) from Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors, both doctors and communities are able to interact in a comfortable and competent way and effectively work with patients in a culturally sensitive and safe clinical environment.

By providing Aboriginal health services with the knowledge they need to meet the needs of the community, Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors are able to make a vital contribution to the delivery of improved health services that can achieve better outcomes, in a more effective and sustainable way.

GP Registrars can seek to undertake part of their vocational training in an accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island health training post

### From Cultural Educator, Val Dahlstrom

*“Hi everyone, my name is Val Dahlstrom and I have worked in Aboriginal Health (both government and as Chair of an ACCHS) for more years than I care to remember. As committed CM/CE we know and are part of our communities, we all feel their pain when sadness surrounds us and rejoice when the sun shines and things go well...and one sign that things are going well is to have a GP Registrar who is willing to treat us as equals, learn about us and take into consideration our past and how it affects us now.”*

# BEING A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

Cultural Educators generally work with Medical Educators to promote, develop, deliver and evaluate cultural awareness training for registrars and other individuals and organisations.

In the course of their work, Cultural Educators may also take part in a variety of other activities designed to promote Aboriginal health training posts to registrars, RTPs, medical students, ACCHSs and others.

RTPs are also encouraged to link their strategic plans and the associated funding to extend the availability of quality cultural education programs to Junior Doctors and other stakeholders.

A Cultural Educator must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, with a sound knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and of the history of the local community, including and understanding of a community's traditional and contemporary ways.

In addition, there are a range of skills that would assist a Cultural Educator to undertake the role and these might include the following:

- Skills and experience in program development and evaluation;
- Experience in the design and delivery of cultural awareness training;
- Experience in cross-cultural facilitation;
- Strong skills in written and oral communication (including giving presentations and interpersonal communication) and brokerage; and
- Demonstrated understanding of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services sector.

# BEING A CULTURAL MENTOR

From Cultural Educator and Project Officer, Jade Johnson

*“With the assistance of Cultural Mentors, Cultural Education can be delivered in a positive atmosphere which continuously reminds all staff about current Local Cultural Values, Lore and Protocols which are practiced.”*

Cultural Mentors support GP Registrars to train in the Aboriginal health training environment, and to participate in activities that will enhance the registrars’ cultural capabilities whilst undertaking their training in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health post.

In the course of their daily work, Cultural Mentors might provide advice on cultural matters and other issues relevant to the needs of an RTP, their staff, registrars and others, and will generally work with Cultural Educators to deliver cultural awareness training and provide curriculum input.

Mentors also work in partnership with Cultural Educators, RTP Medical Educators and local ACCHSs to promote the role of Cultural Mentors to the wider community.

Likewise, RTPs are encouraged to use their strategic plans and associated funding to extend the range of opportunities for registrars (and others) to experience cultural mentoring particularly where it can be provided to the group of registrars who will not be undertaking a training placement in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health post.

• A Cultural Educator must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person endorsed by the local community to have a sound knowledge of the local community history including an understanding of a community’s traditional and contemporary ways.

• Cultural Mentors are likely to have a range of skills, including the following:

- Demonstrated knowledge of and connection with the local community;
- Sound understanding of issues of confidentiality, privacy and ownership of intellectual property; and
- Ability to communicate with a large variety of different groups and individuals.

# INTERESTED IN ENGAGING OR BECOMING A CULTURAL EDUCATOR OR CULTURAL MENTOR?

From Cultural Educator and Project Officer, Jade Johnson

*“Providing non-Aboriginal staff with accessing a wide variety of Cultural Mentors can help to develop stronger partnerships with all staff and allows Registrars, Medical Educators and GP Supervisors to confirm additional support networks within the workplace to address particular issues associated to each Aboriginal Patient (Men, Women, Children & Elders).”*

If you're an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with the necessary skills, becoming a Cultural Educator or a Cultural Mentor can be an enjoyable, fulfilling and worthwhile way to contribute positively to the health of your community.

Likewise, if you're a doctor, health worker or healthcare delivery organisation that's working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, you might benefit from the support of a Cultural Educator or Cultural Mentor in your local area.

Cultural Educators and Cultural Mentors will be supported and encouraged to share their knowledge and actively promote their experiences of working in collaborative, respectful relationships, as well as sharing opportunities for professional networking, peer-to-peer mentoring, learning and development, and career pathways.

THE NEED FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR OR CULTURAL MENTOR IS IDENTIFIED BY THE REGIONAL TRAINING PROVIDER.

TERMS, POSITION DESCRIPTION AND REMUNERATION ARE REVIEWED AND AGREED.

THE REGIONAL TRAINING PROVIDER COMMENCES A RECRUITMENT PROCESS. THIS VARIES BETWEEN REGIONS AND MAY INCLUDE PUBLIC ADVERTISING OF THE POSITION OR A DIRECT APPROACH TO A SUITABLE COMMUNITY MEMBER WHO IS KNOWN TO THE RTP.

THE MOST SUITABLE CANDIDATE IS IDENTIFIED, SELECTED AND APPOINTED TO THE POSITION.

# FURTHER INFORMATION, NEXT STEPS

If you'd like to learn more about the work of a Cultural Educator or Cultural Mentor, or if you're interested in becoming a Cultural Educator or Cultural Mentor, the first step is to contact your local RTP to discuss the opportunities.

You can find a list of RTPs and their contact details at <http://www.gpet.com.au/Training-Providers> (click on 'Training Provider Map' or 'Training Providers by State/Territory').

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY /NEW SOUTH WALES

### Beyond Medical Education (NSW and Victoria)

W: [beyondmedical.com.au](http://beyondmedical.com.au)

T: (02) 6334 4359 or (03) 5441 9300

### Bogong Regional Training Network (NSW and Victoria)

W: [bogong.org.au](http://bogong.org.au)

T: (02) 6057 8600

E: [bogong@bogong.org.au](mailto:bogong@bogong.org.au)

### Coast City Country General Practice Training (ACT and NSW)

W: [ccctraining.org](http://ccctraining.org)

T: (02) 6923 5400

E: [admin@ccctraining.org](mailto:admin@ccctraining.org)

### General Practice Training Valley to Coast (NSW)

W: [gptvtc.com.au](http://gptvtc.com.au)

T: (02) 4968 6753

E: [gptraining@gptvtc.com.au](mailto:gptraining@gptvtc.com.au)

### GP Synergy (Sydney and northern NSW)

W: [gpsynergy.com.au](http://gpsynergy.com.au)

T: (02) 9818 4433

E: [info@gpsynergy.com.au](mailto:info@gpsynergy.com.au)

### North Coast GP Training (northern NSW)

W: [ncgpt.org.au](http://ncgpt.org.au)

T: (02) 6681 5711

E: [info@ncgpt.org.au](mailto:info@ncgpt.org.au)

### WentWest (Western Sydney)

W: [wentwest.com.au](http://wentwest.com.au)

T: (02) 8811 7100

E: [wentwest@wentwest.com.au](mailto:wentwest@wentwest.com.au)

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

### Northern Territory General Practice Education

W: [ntgpe.org](http://ntgpe.org)

T: (08) 8946 7079

E: [reception@ntgpe.org](mailto:reception@ntgpe.org)

## QUEENSLAND

### General Practice Training Queensland (formerly Central and Southern Queensland Training Consortium)

W: [gptq.qld.edu.au](http://gptq.qld.edu.au)

T: 07 3552 8100

### Queensland Rural Medical Education

W: [qrme.org.au](http://qrme.org.au)

T: (07) 4638 7999

### Tropical Medical Training

W: [tmt.org.au](http://tmt.org.au)

T: (07) 4729 5000

# FURTHER INFORMATION, NEXT STEPS

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

### **Adelaide to Outback GP Training Program**

W: [adelaidetooutback.com.au](http://adelaidetooutback.com.au)  
T: (08) 8366 3100  
E: [info@adelaidetooutback.com.au](mailto:info@adelaidetooutback.com.au)

### **Southern GP Training (Victoria and SA)**

W: [southerngptraining.com.au](http://southerngptraining.com.au)  
T: (03) 5132 3100 or (03) 5562 0051  
E: [east@sgpt.com.au](mailto:east@sgpt.com.au) or [west@sgpt.com.au](mailto:west@sgpt.com.au)

### **Sturt Fleurieu Education and Training Limited**

W: [sfet.com.au](http://sfet.com.au)  
T: (08) 8172 7600  
E: [sturt.fleurieu@sfet.com.au](mailto:sturt.fleurieu@sfet.com.au)

## **TASMANIA**

### **General Practice Training Tasmania**

W: [gptt.com.au](http://gptt.com.au)  
T: (03) 6215 5000  
E: [enquiries@gptt.com.au](mailto:enquiries@gptt.com.au)

## **VICTORIA**

### **Beyond Medical Education (Victoria and NSW)**

W: [beyondmedical.com.au](http://beyondmedical.com.au)  
T: (03) 5441 9300 or (02) 6334 4359

### **Bogong Regional Training Network (Victoria and NSW)**

W: [bogong.org.au](http://bogong.org.au)  
T: (02) 6057 8600  
E: [bogong@bogong.org.au](mailto:bogong@bogong.org.au)

### **Southern GP Training**

W: [southerngptraining.com.au](http://southerngptraining.com.au)  
T: (03) 5132 3100 or (03) 5562 0051  
E: [east@sgpt.com.au](mailto:east@sgpt.com.au)  
or  
[west@sgpt.com.au](mailto:west@sgpt.com.au)

### **Victorian Metropolitan Alliance**

W: [vma.com.au](http://vma.com.au)  
T: (03) 9822 1100

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **Western Australia General Practice Education and Training**

W: [wagpet.com.au](http://wagpet.com.au)  
T: (08) 9473 8200  
E: [admin@wagpet.com.au](mailto:admin@wagpet.com.au)



