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NEWS

# GPs are the beating heart of the health system – 2025 proved it

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**After a year of advocacy, progress, and a few battles, RACGP President Dr Michael Wright reflects on the year, and what lies ahead.**



RACGP President Dr Michael Wright opening November’s GP25 conference in Brisbane. (Image: Jake Pinskierr)

As the year draws to a close, I’ve found myself reflecting on what has been one of the most challenging, exhilarating and important years for general practice in recent memory.

And right now, those reflections centre on the attack on the Jewish community at [Bondi Beach](#).

I am deeply saddened by these tragic events, and my thoughts are with the victims, their families, and all those affected,

including the courageous first responders and community members.

At this painful time, we stand together in compassion and solidarity, reaffirming our commitment to care for one another and support our patients, colleagues, and communities through the days ahead.

My first year as your President

When I [stepped into the role of RACGP President](#) late last year, I knew the job would be big.

One year on, I’ve seen just how much general practice sits at the centre of every major health debate, every reform, every political announcement, and every community story.

In 2025, general practice wasn’t just part of the national conversation, it was the front page.

From major [Medicare reform](#) and [workforce commitments](#) to the [digital tools](#) reshaping our profession, this year helped Australia see something GPs have long known – without strong general practice, our health system simply does not work.

And the numbers tell a powerful story.

GPs provided more than 172 million services last year, 90% of Australians saw us, and 80% have a preferred GP.

Patients say we listen, respect them and spend time with them.

In a health system under immense strain, this kind of trust is priceless.

Our annual [Health of the Nation](#) report confirmed what we feel in our practice every day, that complexity is rising, consultations are longer, mental health and chronic disease dominate our workloads.

But patient satisfaction remains sky-high.

We are doing more for more people with virtually the same per-patient funding we had a decade ago, and that is where much of the tension lies.

While demand grows, investment in general practice as a share of total health spending has been shrinking for years.

Hospitals consume more, while prevention, the very care that keeps people out of emergency departments, remains underfunded.

This year, we worked around the clock to challenge that imbalance.



Federal Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler at GP25, at the RACGP’s Hackathon, in Kalgoorlie with RACGP Vice President Dr Ramya Raman, and signing the college’s third MOU with NACCHO.

(Clockwise) Speaking with



## A year of advocacy, progress, and a few battles

One of my earliest tasks as President was launching the [RACGP's five-year strategic plan](#), built on four pillars: outstanding fellowship training, a flourishing GP workforce, a future-ready profession, and general practice at the heart of the health system.

It set a clear agenda – one that I and your college have pursued relentlessly, and which has made significant progress.

We secured [record GP training numbers](#).

We celebrated the renewal of our Australian Medical Council accreditation.

We achieved [\\$660 million in Federal Government support](#) for GP trainee wages, leave entitlements and new training places – foundational reforms that will help rebuild a workforce stretched to breaking point.

We saw [long-overdue investment in women's health](#). We achieved [reforms in ADHD care](#).

We saw Rural Generalists [recognised and valued as a specialty](#).

And in Queensland, we successfully secured an [exemption of GPs from payroll tax](#) – a victory that must now spread nationwide.

But not all advocacy wins came easily.

While the Federal Government's additional investment in general practice has been appreciated, the rollout of the new [bulk-billing incentive program](#), launched on 1 November, was the source of much tension.

When politicians began promising 'free GP visits' to all, and when [GP incomes were misrepresented publicly](#), many of us felt disrespected and undermined.

The college [called out misinformation](#) clearly and firmly – privately with government, and publicly through media.

We defended the clinical and financial autonomy of practices.

Our position has been, and remains, simple: we support investment in general practice, but we will not accept reforms that ignore complexity or devalue the care our patients increasingly need.

Incentives must be used to support our patients, not to shame GPs, their work, or the funding they need to provide high quality care.

## The joy of the job

Despite lots of changes and challenges, many positive moments this year stand out.

Visiting practices across the country. Hearing registrars be more excited than ever about their futures. Attending [fellowship ceremonies](#) and seeing the pride on the faces of new Fellows.

[Visiting Kalgoorlie](#) with RACGP Vice President Dr Ramya Raman and seeing what true community collaboration looks like. It reminded me that in a country as vast as Australia, GPs are needed everywhere but our rural GPs are critical lifelines in their communities.

I have been inspired by our [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander GPs](#) who are leading our college and indeed the nation's health system in showing what culturally safe care must look like.

That commitment was strengthened further with the RACGP and NACCHO signing our third MoU, resolving to jointly advocate for culturally safe and clinically appropriate healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

And I have been pleased to see the college's International Medical Graduate (IMG) Committee getting on its feet.

These experiences help to remind me why we fight so hard.



(Clockwise) Speaking at GP25,

launching the RACGP's Health of the Nation report in Canberra, and the college's Victorian Fellowship ceremony.

## The Future: Complex, challenging, but ours to shape

The next year will bring more change.

There are many reviews and reports still to be released and responded to: scope of practice, incentives, and after-hours care are all awaiting Federal Government decisions.

We will see new consultations on increasing scope of practice for other health professionals, and a review of Medicare consultation item numbers.

Private insurers are moving into general practice ownership. Digital tools and particularly AI scribes are becoming commonplace with [40% of GPs now using them](#), our ageing population will increase demand for complex care, and we have growing challenges in providing aged and disability care.

Some of these changes pose risks. Others offer real opportunity.

GPs will increase our scope. GPs will keep people well. GPs will keep people out of hospital. GPs know their communities and save the system billions.

If we want health reform that works, general practice must not be on the periphery – it must remain at the centre.

## Holding our heads high

As we enter 2026, my message is simple: keep providing excellent care and know that your college will continue to fight for the funding, respect and recognition you deserve.

Two million Australians see us every week. They trust us because we earn that trust every day.

The evidence is clear. General practice remains the most accessed, most efficient and most trusted part of Australia's health system.

So, thank you for allowing me to represent you and to share the truth of how we need to solve the challenges of the health system.

It has been a big year for many of us, and I hope you are able to spend time with your family and friends this festive season.

The response to the horrific events at Bondi Beach has reinforced to me the power of the diversity of our nation, and that includes our GPs all around Australia, so many of whom have come from other countries and continue to give back to their communities in invaluable ways.

I’m incredibly proud to represent you all.

I look forward to 2026, and to a brighter, stronger future for general practice in Australia.

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- AI scribes   bulk billing   GP shortage   Health of the Nation   Medicare   RACGP President   women’s health

NEWSGP WEEKLY POLL

As a GP, which if these impacted you most in 2025?

- ☐ Changes to ADHD diagnosis and prescribing

4%
- ☐ Patients’ continued interest in weight-loss drugs

23%
- ☐ The new Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program

13%
- ☐ Decreasing vaccination rates

3%
- ☐ New women’s health MBS items

1%
- ☐ Changes to Chronic Disease Management Framework

40%
- ☐ Increasing availability of AI scribes

12%

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